

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE IN CHRISTIAN PREACHING:  
A CASE STUDY IN JAPANESE PROTESTANTISM

by

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to consider the function and effectiveness of Christian preaching in the cultural context of Japan. The study will be limited to Protestant preaching by selecting seven preachers who left a significant impact upon the church as a whole in Japan and analyzing them in terms of personality, faith, theology and their preaching. Masahisa Uemura and Danjo Ebina were two of the earliest converts to Protestant Christianity who became respected ecclesiastical leaders as well as effective preachers. Kanzo Uchimura, though not ordained, conducted series of lectures on the Bible, which were, in essence, preaching. Gumpei Yamamuro and Toyohiko Kagawa were men of the Social Gospel, though their spirituality was deeply rooted in piety and fiery evangelical faith. Zenda Watanabe was a biblical scholar who combined an academic career and a preaching ministry in a local church extremely well. Masahisa Suzuki was the sample of the best of post-war preachers whose biblical scholarship and social consciousness were intricately interwoven in preaching.

This study, then, attempts to probe into the Protestant preaching in the unique cultural setting of Japan, with its complex linguistic heritage, through the lives and works of the seven selected men. Analyzing the relational dynamics of culture and language in general, and in the particular setting of Japan as a backdrop, seven preachers and their sermons will be studied in order to gain some insight into the oral communi-

cation of the gospel in the church in Japan for coming days.

The thesis of the study is that the followers of Jesus, from the very beginning of the Christian movement, were people of proclaimed words. The history of the church has inherited from its formative period a religion of spoken words rooted in the culture and language of a particular setting into which it aimed to make its message penetrate. It is the contention of this writer that effective preaching is possible only when both the Bible as the source of the message and the culture and language in which that message is to be conveyed are understood and mastered.

It is the hope of this writer to indicate through this study that Christian preaching can be effective in Japan, where traditional culture and religions have for centuries set patterns for the society in terms of values and attitudes, human relationships and communicational dynamics and where Christianity to this day remains an alien religion.

## CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

Christianity is a historical religion, with people living in a historical setting and time. Christianity, when it exerted power and influence in times past, seemed to maintain its effectiveness, particularly in a non-Christian culture, by critical minds and introspective attitudes in reviewing its past. At the same time, a sensitive understanding and mastery of the culture in which it attempted to exist and which it wished to transform appeared to be inevitable. It is clear, as we consider the contemporary scene in which we are called to participate in God's mission, that we must be equipped with a keen sense of strategy and knowledge of the social structure which we intend to affect with values of life demonstrated as the eternal truth by Jesus in his ministry. History, then, is God's working field as well as the arena of work for the people of God responding to the Love of God manifested in Jesus and presented to us in the Bible. Certainly Israel and Christianity were not solely responsible for the birth of a historical consciousness in the Western world. What they did was, in Hans Meyerhoff's analysis, (a) to charge history with a religious significance which it had not previously had and (b) to read the progression of history as a clue to the design and direction imposed

upon it by God's will.<sup>1</sup> This historical consciousness, charged by the events and people in the Judeo-Christian heritage, is crucial in clarifying the mission to which we are called and committed.

What is required of the people of God to effectively participate in God's mission is to sharpen a sense of history as the arena of God's work, to be able to spell out and analyze the social and cultural context in which history is moving and to be able to function with a command of knowledge and strategy for bringing forth as concrete realities in human situations what Jesus demonstrated as the nature and will of God.

Man's uniqueness is asserted in the ability to use language. Man as a cultural existence is possible only because he is able to utilize words and communicate various dynamics of his internal life to another person. In this process of communication a sharing of knowledge and perception is made possible and mutuality and transmission of values and attitudes function as a foundation for forming a community unique among animals.

Christianity has uplifted language from a common human instrument for transmission of ideas to a value-creating and directional power by identifying, though symbolically, the power of God and that of words. Though a heavily Greek

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<sup>1</sup>Hans Meyerhoff, The Philosophy of History in Our Time (New York: Doubleday, 1959), p. 2.



influence is found in the proclamative first chapter of the Johannine gospel, the understanding of God as a "speaking agent" is nothing strange in the life and teaching of Jesus as well as in the rich religious history of the Jewish people. "When all things began, the Word already was. The Word dwelt with God, and what God was, the Word was." (NEB) These words of the first verse of the gospel according to John do not make words a god but stress the inseparable nature of a divine being and words as communicative symbols for interaction and exchange of feelings, ideas and internalized images. A speaking-god may not be a strange existence in the history of religions but no other religion has placed such an importance upon the relationship between words and a divine presence as Christianity has done throughout its history.

God speaking to human hearts in Christianity is not limited to the spoken words in preaching, but the history of the church from its very conception has made preaching the foremost instrument in transmitting the Word of God to human situations. Whether the actual communication of the gospel message was or was not successful, a sense of calling to take the gospel in and to the world inevitably took the form of preaching of the Word by words by the followers of Jesus throughout the centuries. Preaching and the history of the church have become so intimately identified that a saying such as "the church stands or falls with its preaching" has become familiar and to many people a near-truth.

From the earliest history of the Christian community,

even before the formation of ecclesiastical organizations, Christian discourse took the form of verbal communication. The Acts of the Apostles describes outstanding examples of such discourse by uplifting Peter and Stephen, followed by Paul, who established an unshakable foundation for Christian preaching. The communication of a message through a discourse format was not completely unique in the ministry of Jesus and the early church. Certainly it was an evolutionary development, so to speak, of the post-exilic synagogue practice of the reading of Scripture and the exposition of it. But the verbal communication in the form of discourse in Jesus and his followers had a stronger coloration of the prophetic tradition of pronouncement than did the instructive and expository presentations in the synagogues.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, verbal expressions of the Good News in the very early stage of the Christian movement had a dominant importance whether it was prophetic, exegetical or liturgical in the content of the message or in the formats through which the message was spoken.

Thus runs the history of the Christian church and its mission. We need not limit our examination to the realm of spoken words of the message of Jesus Christ to see that the history of the church has ups and downs, both in quality of the message and in the effectiveness of forms used for communication. From the shaking experience of those gathered at

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<sup>2</sup>Yngve Brilioth, A Brief History of Preaching (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), p. 4.

Pentecost and the intensive missionary zeal and outreach of Paul and his comrades in the formative period of the church, through the ancient Patristic age, in which the social environment permitted the slow structuring of an ecclesiastical organization and a formulation of Christian doctrines, to the falling off of a persuasive and prophetic pronouncement of the gospel in the early medieval time, on to the resurgence of the spoken message in the Scholastic age and, naturally, to the dynamic explosion of the reformers bringing forth the transformation of the church life mainly through the use of language, we are able to trace our rich religious heritage in a historical perspective.<sup>3</sup> It may not be an overstatement to say that the history of the Christian church is the history of the people attempting to command their language in order to express the gospel message, which they desired to share and present to others.

The purpose of this study is to assess the Christian preaching in one hundred years of the Protestant history of Japan, not only in relationship to the totality of history of the Christian emphasis upon the oral communication of the gospel, but also in the context of the unique cultural and linguistic characteristics of the Japanese society. Though the history of Japanese Protestantism is relatively short in relation to the total church history, it contains within it a

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<sup>3</sup>Edwin Charles Dargan, A History of Preaching (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1954), I, 25-28.

rich spiritual heritage which was brought to the once isolated island empire. That heritage was transmitted to the solid soil of Japan, which integrated the animistic folk religion of Shinto, the highly refined spirituality of Buddhism, and the disciplined ethical orientation of Confucianism, by a handful of committed missionaries from New England in the mid-nineteenth century. Preaching as an oral expression of religious exhortation was not absent in the religious traditions of Japan. Buddhism, for centuries, until the latter part of the nineteenth century, conducted grass-roots meetings for instruction at temples and village meetings by the discourse of priests. Though Christian preaching took over the Buddhist terminology, it took on the coloration of Confucian ethical instruction based upon the biblical insights rather than the colorful vividness of the narrative form of Buddhist preaching.

This study, then, attempts to probe into the Protestant preaching in the unique cultural setting of Japan, with its complex linguistic heritage. With a probe into the relational dynamics of culture and language in general, and in the particular setting of Japan as a backdrop, seven preachers and their sermons, spread out through the history of Japanese Protestantism, are selected for the study. The selection of the seven is based upon historians' evaluation already done in terms of their significant contribution to the life of the church. Also taken into consideration for the selection of the seven preachers is their pastoral work

as recognized by congregations and fellow workers, and the availability of published materials--biographical, books they have written or collections of their sermons. They are selected roughly from different periods within the one hundred-year spread, though there is inevitably some overlapping among them. They were all men because the presence of woman preachers, though increasingly significant in number, is a post-war phenomenon (after 1945) and still in the infant stage in terms of making a spiritual impact upon the life of the church in Japan.

The selection of the seven men does not negate the existence of effective preachers unknown to public ears and attention. As a matter of fact, a real struggle to verbalize the truth of the Christian gospel in "people's language" occurred in small churches and preaching stations in remote towns and villages. On those preachers of God we ask His benediction as we proceed to move through the lives of better known names whose preaching attracted Christian and non-Christian attention in the non-Christian social and cultural environment of Japan.

For the concluding section of the study, I will attempt to make some analysis of these seven Christian preachers of Japanese Protestantism in order to map out a possible course or courses for preaching in the coming age, with a limited scope of the 1980s in mind. No prophetic insights will be asserted but possible directional guidelines may be achieved for imaginative and effective preaching in Japan.

There has been almost no systematic study of preaching in Japan until the publication of Nippon no Sekkyoja Tachi by Professor Tsuneaki Kato of Tokyo Union Theological Seminary in 1972.<sup>4</sup> Professor Kato took up five preachers to initiate his study of preaching from the view point of practical theology, which he teaches at his school. The five men are Masahisa Uemura, Tsuneteru Miyagawa, Danjo Ebina, Gumpei Yamamuro and Tokutaro Takakura. Uemura, Ebina and Yamamuro are included in this study and this writer owes much to Professor Kato's insight. A projected publication of selected sermons from different continents, under planning by the United Church of Christ in Japan Publishing Department, is an indication that there is a mounting need and desire in Japan for the study of preaching. Professor Kato indicates in his book that he will continue his historical analysis of Japanese preachers beyond the five men he has so far dealt with.

Several comprehensive studies of Japanese church history have been done in English. Otis Cary's A History of Christianity in Japan, Winburn T. Thomas' Protestant Beginnings in Japan, Charles W. Iglehart's A Century of Protestant Christianity in Japan, Richard H. Drummond's A History of Christianity in Japan are four more helpful studies. The treatment of preaching within Japanese Protestant history, however, is extremely inadequate in any of these books. A

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<sup>4</sup>Tsuneaki Kato, Nippon no Sekkyoja Tachi (The Preachers of Japan) (Tokyo: Shinkyō, 1972).

well-known Christian figure such as Toyohiko Kagawa is not evaluated from the point of view of preaching by any author. It is the desire for this study to present a different dimension in approaching the history of Japanese Protestantism, though the basic intent of the study is future-oriented, of trying to search out how effective preaching can be done in Japan in order to make the oral expression and interpretation of the gospel of Jesus Christ a significant means for the accomplishment of Missio Dei as Japan moves into an escalated phase of industrialization.

## CHAPTER 2

## JAPANESE PREACHING IN ITS CULTURAL CONTEXT

Language and Culture in Interaction

No other animal has achieved the level of verbal communication that human beings have done with systematized symbols and means for using those symbols. This system of sounding out one's internal reactions and putting them down in communicative symbols is what we understand to be language. Our language makes it possible for men and women to transmit experience and knowledge, unifying a group of human beings for mutual understanding and acceptance. The process which is promoted by the use of language leads to what we call culture. Because language is unique among humans in comparison to other animals, culture as "cultivation or nurture of desirable human capacities" is a distinct human mark.<sup>1</sup> Through language and culture one learns experiences and knowledge of other persons. Instinctual elements are not absent but they do not determine the communication process involved as in other animals of a high order. Language is not a biological product, though bio-physical factors play important rôles in making it function. That is to say that

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<sup>1</sup>Henry B. Clark, "Culture, Society and Community," in John Macquarrie (ed.) Dictionary of Christian Ethics (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), p. 79.



language, especially in its spoken form, is a socio-cultural phenomenon and activity. As Edward Sapir points out, a person without society may still learn to walk but never to talk.<sup>2</sup> Basically there is not much variation among human beings in terms of walking form and style, but the language of human society is intricately diversified according to a particular form of communal format in which a set of communicational systems is developed. Sapir argues that speech is a non-instinctive, acquired, "cultural" function but this argument can be applied to language as a whole.<sup>3</sup>

Language as a distinctively human phenomenon, then, is characterized by its voluntary behavior, distinguished from instinctual utterances of sound and emotion, formed into a set of habits and transmitted from one generation to another, constantly undergoing changes within that set. There is nothing absolute or final about a particular language because of the on-going experiential changes of every human being. A new experience of life, when shared with others in a communal relationship, affects the set of habits and symbols to which that experience is integrated. If a certain experience is non-existent for an extended period among one group, it is possible that a symbol related to that experience may submerge from usage and eventually

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<sup>2</sup>Edward Sapir, Language, an Introduction to the Study of Speech (New York: Harcourt, 1949), p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

disappear.

Language is basically conservative and slow to change. New experiences of people in a common living situation produce new words and expand the scope of a language. But an established language resists change even though the content of the language may alter significantly. Thus we may say that language is "systematic and unsystematic, regular and irregular."<sup>4</sup> This is due to the social nature of language. Language develops into a systematized institution through the common living of a large number of people gathered around a set of conventions and transitions and frames of experience. But the social dynamics of human society are never void of exceptions, irregularities and simple creative newness. The issue of communication, then, is a complex and inevitable part of human existence itself.

Language is not the only complex matter in this world today. Linguists and anthropologists in their studies are increasingly determined to emphasize that the problem of communication across cultures and sub-cultures may well hold the key to human survival itself. Such a reminder is not necessary as many people in their daily lives experience faulty communication even within an intimate relationship. The issue of language and culture is thus crucial to whether the world is able to preserve its human quality, or, in the extreme, to human existence itself. The problem seems to be

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<sup>4</sup>Yuen Ren Chao, Language and Symbolic Systems (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), p. 3.

acute but it is not restricted to the contemporary scene. Throughout the history of mankind, the interacting cultures' held the key to the moulding of history itself and the major task of such interactions rested with functioning languages. Certainly the process of inter-cultural interactions enabled by language is not unique. The whole social dynamic of any social organization is dependent upon language as a means of facilitating that dynamic to function. When the language stops serving the facilitating role, it tends to bring social disorganization and an eventual "death" of a culture by extinction or integration into some other cultural context.

Thus a particular culture, through language, transmits its components to others and in interactional processes receives input from other cultures, whether there is an eventual integration of them or rejection. Culture in itself as "the socially inherited assemblage of practices and beliefs that determines the texture of our lives" relies on language as a source of cohesion and interdependence of that texture.<sup>5</sup> And language reflects its environment and circumstance, formation and expression of personalities, social structure and interaction, cultural values and beliefs which make up the whole of the culture of which it is a part. This mutual dependency of culture and language is universal in its application to all cultures. The study of language and culture is never a dichotomized process. The contemporary study

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<sup>5</sup>Sapir, op. cit., p. 207.

in linguistics has a dominant orientation toward grasping "language in culture" rather than "language and culture." This is evident in the flourishing scholarship in the somewhat specialized field of sociolinguistics. Though there are some theoretical and methodological disagreements within the scholarship of sociolinguistics, a definite consensus is seen among linguistics scholars in general that an accurate and meaningful grasp of language must take into full account the necessary elements of people, environment and cultural dynamics together with analytical studies of language form and construction. Peng describes the situation,

Sociolinguistics today is linguistics par excellence. It requires verbal and non-verbal human interactions in various social contexts; above all, it aims at a systematization of the interlace of such interactions and contexts at all levels of interlocution.<sup>6</sup>

The development in sociolinguistics is only one indication of an increasing awareness among linguists that language is learned, not inborn, in a cultural and social context and that a study of language as a form of communication must be based upon a contextual process in terms of related culture. This awareness should not be limited to linguists. There is an urgent need for every society and its members, in the age of dehumanizing institutionalization and standardization, to re-assess its language in the light of contemporary cultural and social dynamics in order to

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<sup>6</sup>Fred C. C. Peng (ed.) Language in Japanese Society Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1975), p. 27.

maintain its human quality. Language is voluntary behavior and it tends to be formed into a set of habits. Unless it is brought to a conscious level, it may run its own course away from its original meaning and context. Thus it may function as a means of "dis-communication" rather than "communication", leading to a breakdown of human relationships. Language is conservative and resists change but at the same time it is exposed to a constant stimulus to re-form and re-structure by its mere existence in the dynamics of cultural and social setting. Unless there are conscious efforts to maintain a reasonable degree of the meaningful functions of language, there will be inevitable social disorganization among members of the society bound by that language.

Such a situation of disrupted human relationships due to breakdown in a communicative and meaningful language has aroused a deep concern among social scientists in Japan in the last ten years. This concern has resulted in a significant wave of study and publication of books on the Japanese language and its relationships to cultural factors which molded its shape and yet appear to be drifting apart, causing confusion and communicational discrepancies, even in some basic social units such as the family.

The interest and concern in the relationship of language and culture in Japan does not seem to have reached its momentum in the Christian community. The university unrest of the late 1960s has affected various segments of the life of the church in Japan and a painful process of healing

of both spiritual and organizational cleavages is still going on after nearly ten years. What caused such a serious disruption in the Christian church in Japan, and in the United Church of Christ in Japan in particular, is complex in nature. It is clear, however, that one element in the cause of the difficulty was a breakdown of communication in interpreting social as well as theological issues and in dealing with them with a functional language with a high degree of consensus on meaning. The seriousness of the situation and issues involved have aroused some people in the church to re-evaluate language, not only in traditional Christian expressions, but also in the relationships of language, religion and society. Though this concern has not reached an impact point, especially theological minds, eloquent critics and commentators within the Christian community, such as Hichihei Yamamoto and the late Arimasa Mori, have attempted to clarify the issues or at least to uplift legitimate questions.<sup>7</sup>

The point here is not to elaborate on the analysis of the state of the church in Japan, but to indicate the pressing need to clarify and deepen the understanding of language in

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<sup>7</sup>Arimasa Mori was a professor at the University of Paris until his death in 1976. Basically a philosopher, and an authoritative scholar on Pascal, he wrote extensively on the philosophy of life from the Christian perspective. Hichihei Yamamoto is a unique publisher and an author in his own right. Most of his writings are done in a popular form of mixing cultural anthropology, theology and philosophy.

Japanese culture in order to make the Christian proclamation effective in establishing dialogical and constructive relationships with the predominantly non-Christian environment and ethos of the country.

### The Language of Japan

The historical evolution of linguistic development of the Japanese language places that language in the Altaic family, which includes "Turkish, Mongolian, the Manchu of the last semi-nomadic conquerors of China, and Korean...."<sup>8</sup> It has, however, a distinct vocabulary and phonetics and thus only a specialist is able to recognize any underlying similarities between Japanese and other languages within the Altaic family. Phonetically, it is one of the simplest languages in the world and consonants are quite restricted in number. Structurally, it is similar to Korean but radically different from Chinese (as well as English). There is no distinction between singular and plural or of gender. There is usually no specification of the subject in a sentence. A series of inflections expresses mood, voice, degrees of politeness, as well as negative and positive usage.<sup>9</sup> The Japanese language may be considered a "visual" language while English, in contrast, is an audio language. This somewhat exaggerated classification is

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<sup>8</sup>Edwin O. Reischauer, The Japanese (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 387.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 388.

an analogy but indicates a mental dynamic which is involved in language. A Japanese person speaking tends to have an imagery of written language, mainly Chinese characters, and this imagery may be more important than the sound it conveys. This is just one factor out of many which make Japanese a difficult language for a person outside the cultural context of Japan, and especially without the knowledge of Chinese characters, to learn.

Thus the Japanese language started out purely as a spoken language until the introduction of the Chinese culture and its language into Japan during the flourishing interactions of the sixth to the ninth centuries. The complex formation of the written Japanese, intimately tied to Japan's passionate adherence to Chinese culture, and to Buddhism as a part of it, especially among the ruling classes and intellectuals, makes that language a strikingly different system from its linguistic relatives. Its syncretistic characteristics, which reflect some aspect of the culture in which it functions, have contributed to the complexity. The mixture of Chinese characters and two phonetic systems was able to indigenize several thousand words from other languages, such as Portuguese and English. It is into this complexity of the language soil that Christianity was first introduced in the 16th century with the arrival of Francis Xavier. The nature of the Japanese language seemed to determine the course of the newly introduced religion for centuries to follow.



### Culture and Japanese Language

Language as a socio-cultural phenomenon and activity must be understood in its cultural context. If the Japanese language is considered rich in its linguistic potential and yet so complex in its structural and written symbols, a student of the language must breathe the whole cultural ethos and social dynamic of the Japanese society before he is able to find a clue to understanding the entire system of symbolic behavior of the people of that society.

What, then, are some of the significant elements affecting the Japanese language? Several characteristics of the language, popularly pointed to as that language is discussed, may provide some channels for inroads into its cultural context. One is its vagueness in expressions and another is its elaborate system of honorifics. The vagueness is not a structural part of the language. A speaker of Japanese can, linguistically speaking, speak as clearly as a speaker of English. Certainly it is possible to be vague in English but not to the extent many Japanese are in their language. It is not that Japanese are always uncertain and vague about the message they desire to convey in communication. There are cultural dynamics which make vagueness a value in contrast to an explicit and clear-cut expression which may be seen as a sign of arrogance or, on occasion, shallowness. It is easy to find a vague term, expression, utterance in Japanese, and they are cultural reflections.

The system of honorifics, too, is cultural, though it is so intricately interwoven into the linguistic system of Japanese that a beginning student of the language tends to consider it purely a structural matter. The honorifics are related intricately to the vertical structure of the society itself as well as to the sex distinction, and reflect the cultural virtue of vagueness, avoidance of directness and "blending in." By use of honorific prefixes, a speaker is able to omit the subject in a sentence or even a verb and yet convey the main thrust of his/her message. In the extensive use of honorifics, one's identity is determined very much by the other in communicational relationships. According to who the other person is, or is presumed to be, a speaker determines his status and thus relies on a certain set of language patterns with honorifics. As Suzuki argues, "A Japanese has a strong tendency to reach a recognition of his self-identity with others as his criterion."<sup>10</sup> Thus a person uses a variety of words to mean "I" according to the person he/she comes across. A more important question is, "Who is he/she?" rather than, "Who am I?"

The process of self-identification in the Japanese culture is one of the keys to understanding the language as well as the people. Even for Japanese themselves, a clear understanding of the dynamics involved in language is

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<sup>10</sup>Takao Suzuki, Tozasareta Gengo: Nihongo no Sekai (A Closed Language: The World of Japanese Language) (Tokyo: Shinchosha, 1975), p. 183.

difficult. A competent and popular linguistics scholar, Haruhiko Kindaichi, bluntly states that what makes the Japanese language functional for Japanese themselves is the matter of kan, intuition or hunch. The vagueness mentioned previously functions to dilute the sharpness of open directness but does not necessarily disrupt the communicative process because the hearers put their kan to work. The problem here is serious for an outsider trying to communicate in Japanese without the cultural orientation in which intuitive sensitivities are taken for granted. Not only is it difficult for an outsider to command a full understanding of the dynamics involved in Japanese communication. It is an increasingly complex situation as younger generations become multi-cultural or cross-cultural personalities in the age of mass communication and media.

Communication of religious concepts and sentiments are so intricately woven into cultural dynamics that anything which has no, or very little, foundation in a particular culture has a difficult task finding adequate means and tools for conveying what it has to assert. This was the case with Christianity in Japan. The difficulty, however, is not restricted to the historical timing. After one hundred years of history, the Protestant movement in Japan, together with the Catholic Church with a longer historical background, still faces difficulties in finding adequate linguistic signs and expressions which may be helpful in indigenizing the faith in the rich and yet complex cultural context of Japan.

### Selfhood: Public and Private

Our concern for language and culture in this study is in relationship to the preaching in Christianity. The Protestant tradition in Japan is traced to the opening of her doors to the outside by Japan in the mid-nineteenth century. The sudden surge of Western culture and the introduction of the Protestant faith were taken by the Japanese as an identical process. Western culture made its way into the traditional Japanese society by means of translation. This, then, was a "translated" culture which was very slow in being assimilated and integrated into the indigenous culture. The same phenomenon is observable in the Protestant faith. The preaching as an integral part of the Protestant faith, too, in the beginning and for decades to follow, could not shed the coloration of "translatedness."

The slow indigenization of the Western culture as well as the Protestant faith was due to the complexity of the Japanese language, as we have observed. The language reflecting the peculiar dynamics of social structure and human relationships within Japan, having its own concept of logic, or as is often said, lack of logic, made the work of translation itself an awkward and difficult task. Inevitably, there were significant discrepancies and gaps in the interactional process in linguistic, as well as cultural, translation and transaction.

The logic of the language of daily life, says

Shigehiko Toyama, is extremely informal; nevertheless, communication is not established unless the words follow a certain route.<sup>11</sup> This is the fundamental concept in understanding human linguistic activity. For a listener to understand what a speaker is attempting to communicate requires some commonly agreed upon logic for that communication to be established. The speaker's unfamiliarity with the listener's values, attitudes, social and cultural orientation, demands a rigorously organized logic before a linguistic interaction becomes possible. The opposite is true with a communication process among intimate friends, or family members. There "family members use a language full of abbreviated expressions and leaps of logic."<sup>12</sup>

The linguistic concepts are applicable to group and corporate situations as well as to individuals. With a homogeneous people with unified customs using a single language over an extended period of time, such as Japanese, the degree of mutual comprehension attains an extremely high level.<sup>13</sup> Thus for an outsider, the Japanese language appears to lack a logical foundation and is very difficult to comprehend in terms of the dynamics involved in its communicational functions.

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<sup>11</sup>Shigehiko Toyama, "The Logic of Japanese," in Japan Culture Institute, Guides to Japanese Culture (Tokyo: 1977), p. 29.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

Behind this seemingly complex nature of the Japanese language, we must see the cultural and social patterns which dictate interpersonal relationships and social interactions. The most helpful concept in understanding the dynamics involved in Japanese society has been presented by Chie Nakane in her analysis of Japan as a vertical society.<sup>14</sup> Nakane's argument is that the group consciousness of the Japanese places a primary emphasis upon "frame" (ba), which may be a locality, an institution or a particular relationship which binds a set of individuals into a particular group. The contrasting emphasis is upon "attribute" (shikaku), which implies a qualitative standard which distinguishes one individual from others by means of lineage, gender, and occupation. In the Japanese society, according to Nakane, the "frame" is much more important, though both attribute and frame are inevitable elements in locating an individual within a society. The core criterion, whether consciously perceived or not, is the traditional concept of ie, or household, as a community in daily life.

According to Nakane's conceptual model of the Japanese society as a household in terms of interpersonal relationships, the pattern of human interactions is basically vertical. The relationship between parents and children is basically that of superior and subordinate; it is vertical. The vertical line,

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<sup>14</sup>Chie Nakane, Japanese Society (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1970).

then, is where a person finds his/her frame and is ranked. In this vertical structure of Japanese society, with a cohesive group orientation, an individual person develops a pattern of selfhood which transforms according to the frame in which he/she finds him/herself at various times.

Dean C. Barnlund makes an insightful observation in analyzing the public and private self within the dynamics of selfhood among Japanese people.<sup>15</sup> Barnlund's study was done through a contrast of communication dynamics between Japanese and Americans. The image which Barnlund portrays in an exaggerated form is nevertheless helpful in understanding one aspect of the dynamics operative in interpersonal communication in Japanese society.

At least in contrast to Americans, a Japanese maintains a greater private sector which he/she does not disclose to others. What is considered to be a public sector in one's selfhood, which he/she wants to disclose and by which he/she contacts others' public sectors, is protected by various defense mechanisms, which may be better understood through concepts of a vertical society with intricately interwoven frames and attributes. In any case, the private self is available for communication only within defined and established relationships, such as families and intimate friends.

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<sup>15</sup>Dean C. Barnlund, Nihonjin no Hyogen Kozo (Public and Private Self in Japan and the United States) (Tokyo: Simul, 1973).

Japanese, says Barnlund, prefer a defined and structured form of communication rather than spontaneous and informal conversations. The more forms and structures you have, the less danger there is of self-disclosure. Japanese tend to avoid private thought and ideas for conversations as well as non-verbal expressions such as bodily touch. Barnlund's hypothesis comes through strong in emphasizing that a Japanese tends to maintain a superficial level of communication through a minimum exposure of public self and thus he/she has less chance of experiencing a total self-discovery and identity.

Barnlund's provocative hypothesis must be carefully examined. His argument, however, sheds some light on the interpersonal dynamics of Japanese people and society in a particular realm of verbal communication. Barnlund himself gives credit to Nakane, as well as to Arimasa Mori and Takeo Doi, for providing him with some clues for his probe into the complex social structure in Japan.

Takeo Doi aroused much popular interest in Japan by his book Amoe no Kozo.<sup>16</sup> Doi, a highly respected psychiatry professor at Tokyo University, terms a form of psychological dependence, prevalent among Japanese, *amae* and builds on it a psychological prototype which explains a dynamic element that plays a significant role in interpersonal relationships, from the mother-child relationship up to a company-employee tie.

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<sup>16</sup>Takeo Doi, Amoe no Kozo (The Structure of Dependence) (Tokyo: Kobundo, 1971).



He defines amae, roughly, as "a psychological device by which to deny the inexorable fact of separation and sublimate its pain."<sup>17</sup> Though this psychological dynamic and phenomenon is not restricted to Japanese society, it exists in a prolonged form throughout a person's life in the society of Japan.

The psychological structure of dependence Doi stresses should be related to what Barnlund presents in his hypothetical model as well as to Nakane's theory of a vertical society. In it we gradually begin to feel a pattern of communication which weaves and ties persons in the group-oriented culture of Japan. The sensitivity to these cultural and psychological dynamics is vitally important in order for Christian preaching to be something more than a sounding gong or a clanging cymbal.

The dynamics involved in Japanese personalities, generalized by Nakane, Doi, Barnlund and others, must be taken into account for the purpose of understanding the nature of Japanese language and its implications for religious communication such as preaching. Questions may be raised as to what a Japanese Christian preacher will do in dealing with him/herself culturally and psychologically in the use of Japanese language in oral communication of the gospel message. How is one's selfhood molded and established in relationship to his/her calling to be a Christian preacher, which requires a public assertion of the Christian message? These are but

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<sup>17</sup>Takeo Doi, "The Structure of Amae", in Japan Culture Institute, p. 86.

parts of the whole question which needs to be confronted seriously in seeing the Protestant preaching in the Japanese cultural context.

### Language and Culture in Religion

The Japanese religious soil is rich with varieties of religious traditions. The underlying soil is a mixture of Shinto and its animistic cosmic view centered around the institution of shrines, which served as the centers for village life, and Buddhism, introduced to Japan in the sixth century, with its deeply religious spirituality and ethical implications. Christianity, as we have noted, made its way into a rigidly structured feudal age in Japan with the arrival of Xavier in 1549. The Protestant faith has experienced only a century and two decades in this religiously ancient land. The story is yet not simple. There are numerous other spiritual expressions in Japan and the scene is further complicated by the extensive impact of secularism in the industrialized social setting of that country.

Before the introduction of Buddhism, with its heavy overtone of Confucian ethics, the religious ferment in Japan was an unorganized and undifferentiated complex. Buddhism not only enriched and organized the spirituality of the Japanese into a religion integral to the basically village society of the sixth to sixteenth century Japan, but also served as a channel through which culture was developed and refined. Elaborate rituals were developed together with a

variety of arts. Emphasis upon the Lotus Sutra, the scripture, promoted a literary interest together with calligraphy. Discipline in personal and social life through meditation and organized life pattern affected intellectual dialogues, such as the koan in Zen Buddhism.

The most significant contribution of Buddhism, particularly in the light of this study, is the religious discourse, which was integral to the faith from its very onset in Japan. The term sekkyo applied to the discourse on Buddhist sutra and doctrines was taken over by Christianity and means preaching. Buddhists, meanwhile, discontinued the use of the term and now use howa, which literally means a talk on the canon. The sekkyo in Buddhist history, however, for centuries was considered a very important means for religious instruction and proselytization. It was basically a communication of Buddhist faith to the common people.

Kazuo Sekiyama, a scholar of Buddhist literature and art, focuses his study on the art of Buddhist preaching rather than on its religious significance.<sup>18</sup> It is obvious, however, that preaching played a pervasive role in the missionary activities of Buddhism in Japan. From the ancient religious history of Japan, the tie between religion, daily life and entertainment was intimate and interdependent.

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<sup>18</sup>Kazuo Sekiyama, Sekkyo no Rekishi: Bukkyo to Wagei (History of Preaching: Buddhism and the Art of the Narrative) (Tokyo: Iwanami Shinsho, 1978).

Thus what appears to a modern observer to be "play" and entertainment, in ancient Japanese life was not mere play and entertainment in nature but an integral part of life in connection with religious beliefs. The Buddhist preaching, then, must be seen in this light and Sekiyama's emphasis is exactly that the preaching done in temples and local Buddhist stations was to respond to people's needs in life with insights from Buddhist teachings.

The common pattern of Buddhist preaching contained various elements in order to attract listeners' attention. Speaking, singing, laughing and crying were all essential. The style of preaching had a variety according to a situational setting. Certainly there were times for instructional preaching on doctrines and exegetical elaboration of sutras. But preaching in general was directed at the mass, or the common people, and aimed at enlightening and edifying their souls. The priests were trained to have a maximum command of the Japanese language, to know the kind of dialect characteristic of their people, to train their voices and to be able to insert emotion into their speaking.<sup>19</sup>

Out of the Buddhist preaching developed a number of artistically refined entertainment and performing arts. Rakugo and Kodan are two major products. Rakugo is an art of monologue or story-telling with humorous and comical interpretations and expressions, the story-teller often playing two

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

or three characters. Rakugo artists are competent in narrative characterization, not only by the use of words, but by the use of facial changes and vocal timbre. Kodan is a less comical presentation of stories, usually historical in nature. There are no props needed for Rakugo and Kodan other than a cushion, a small table, which is not always necessary, and a fan. Basically, the stories in Rakugo are taken from the life of a lower strata of the community while Kodan stories portray known names of heroic accomplishment.

The study of Rakugo has an intriguing value not only within the history of Buddhism but for the consideration of Christian preaching in Japan. The originator of Rakugo is generally accepted to be Sakuden Anrakuan (1554-1642), who was a priest of Pure-Land Buddhism. Sakuden was more a refiner than an originator of the art, according to Sekiyama. In any case, out of centuries of preaching in Buddhist temples and at village meetings came an immensely popular form of entertainment and performing art of great simplicity.

Not only did Buddhist preaching produce art forms of verbal communication, but it stimulated literary activities both in the area of folk-tales and in historical narratives. The great response preaching received from the common people led to the promotion of a cultural interaction between the dominating class of samurai and aristocrats and the lower classes, composed of artisans, merchants and common laborers. The humor of the common people was refined through preaching and its by-products Rakugo and Kodan, and the ruling classes'

sophisticated taste in literary activities was transformed to understandable expressions and formats for the commoners.

As we have observed, the culture and language of people, especially of the lower classes in the rigidly structured Japanese society of the past, had an intimate relationship to religions, both to Shinto and to Buddhism. Of course, Buddhism took centuries in becoming an indigenized religion. The religious ferment and foundation, however, together with cultural receptivity, made the missionary enterprise of Buddhism effective in radical contrast to that of Christianity centuries later. And a part of the cause of that effectiveness was due to the imaginative oral communication many of the Buddhist priests commanded, especially in their approach to the common people of Japanese society. Certainly the priests were for centuries culturally elite as well as religiously endowed. Listeners to their preaching were probably motivated to give their attention on both spiritual and cultural grounds. In any case, the preaching in Japanese Buddhism was developed and refined to the point of becoming an autonomous art form by the priests' immersion into the life and language of the common people.

It was the commencement of the modernization process in mid-nineteenth century Japan, with a surging interest in Western culture and its rationalism, which brought about the decline of Buddhist preaching. Sekiyama's criticism is directed at the professionalization of priestly preaching as one of the causes for the decline. Eloquence was cherished and

the religiously rich personalities to go with the eloquence were becoming few and far between by the nineteenth century. The entertainment element had become separated from the exposition of religious truth and intellectual and academic assertion seemed to gain priority and dominance. And, of course, the entertainment field was expanding even into village life, where temple preaching had enjoyed a captive audience for centuries. The decline of preaching in Buddhism presents to Christian preachers an insight to be remembered. Sekiyama attempts to summarize his analysis:

Faith is not mere learning and theory. On occasion it may stand on quite a different dimension from rationality. The greatest weakness in contemporary preaching is that it has failed to distinguish the two. When study and theory take priority without a committed passion and enthusiasm, preaching loses the impact upon people.... A true tradition (of preaching) must be constantly exposed to the crisis of time to search out the truth and to discover the relevance of the tradition for that age.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp. 201-2.

## CHAPTER 3

PREACHING AND PREACHERS IN THE  
JAPANESE CHURCHThe Religious Context of  
Early Protestantism

Japan was not virgin soil for Christianity when Protestant Christianity was introduced there in 1859. There was already a religious heritage for Christianity, cultivated by Francis Xavier and the vigorous missionary movement of the Society of Jesus in the sixteenth century. That was the period of the civil wars of Japan (1482-1558) but the flourishing of the faith was short-lived because of the extensive persecution under the militant rule of Hideyoshi and Iyeyasu. Beginning with the arrival of Xavier in Japan in 1549, the number of converts to Christianity quickly increased to approximately three hundred thousand in 1614. Then with the systematic enforcement of the edict against Christians by the Tokugawa shogunate, aiming at the complete extinction of the church in Japan, Christianity was literally annihilated there by the mid-seventeenth century. The persecution was one of the most severe in the history of Christianity. The Christians met their fate with astonishing courage and serenity. The persecution of these Christians is a story of powerful heroism and devotion, which amazed the most fanatic of all persecutors. And at the end of the relentless struggle



Christianity seemed to disappear altogether from the scene. There were some remnants, popularly called the kakure Kirishitan (hidden Christians), mainly on the island of Kyushu. These people, however, during their long years of hiding and camouflaging their faith, lost the distinctiveness of Christianity by its intermingling with folk religions and local mores. Thus their existence, even when the ban against Christianity was lifted officially in 1873, did not contribute significantly to the growth of the faith in Japan.

The attempt to penetrate the feudal society of Japan by the early missionaries of the Society of Jesus, then, was not successful. The Christians disappeared from the surface under the Tokugawa persecution and the prevailing impact left on the Japanese mind over the centuries was a strong impression of the Christians as "people of strange disobedience, of alliance with subversive elements in Japanese society, and of direct connection with conquering powers from the West."<sup>1</sup>

Protestant missionaries first arrived in Japan in 1859. The early missionaries were persons of exceptional fitness. "At first they had to bide their time, making their preparation, learning Japanese, teaching English, translating the Bible and other Christian literature."<sup>2</sup> They included D. B. Simmons, Samuel R. Brown, G. F. Verbeck, J. Liggins,

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<sup>1</sup>Charles W. Iglehart, A Century of Protestant Christianity in Japan (Tokyo: Tuttle, 1959), p. 24.

<sup>2</sup>Masao Takenaka, Reconciliation and Renewal in Japan (New York: Friendship Press, 1957), p. 13.

James C. Ballagh, Jonathan Goble. These were all people of unusual gifts, stern discipline, and passionate zeal for the proclamation of the Gospel. By 1872 there were seven missionary organizations working in Japan; and during the next decade thirteen new ones made their entry. During these years, the missionaries confronted a very precarious life amidst the political commotion and social unrest. The people regarded them with both admiration, for they represented the Western civilization, and a suspicion and even hatred, for they were Christians. These men and women bringing the Protestant faith to Japan were patient and courageous workers.

The penetration of Japanese society was no easy task for these missionaries. The country was in a sort of moral and spiritual vacuum and yet the resistance against Christianity was stubbornly persistent, not only by the established religions, but by the ubiquitous local and kinship communities. There was a surge of curiosity and hunger for modernity, and things Western as symbols of that modernity, and Christianity was considered to be an inevitable part of them. And yet, the Christian faith appeared totally alien even to the established intellectuals.

It was in December 1871, two years before the lifting of the ban against Christianity, that a group of missionaries, together with a few English-speaking residents, began a series of prayer meetings in the Yokohama area. Into this group came a few Japanese residents--some through curiosity, others through a desire to please their teachers. The meetings were

filled with the unity of commitment and thus a spirit of dedication. The Japanese students attending could not help being taken into this uplifting experience. "Some were not too impressed with Ballagh's sermons but even they were moved and inspired by his passionate prayers and finally led to the life of faith."<sup>3</sup>

It is important to note the general characteristics of these missionaries in the early stage of Japanese Protestantism because they were to be a decisive influence in the formation of the Protestant ethos in Japan. Previous to 1872, a total of only ten persons had been baptized by the Protestant missionaries. The un-baptized students, inspired by missionaries, whose personalities exerted a sense of dignity and integrity, asked for their own prayer meetings and study. Ballagh responded to the request and led them in daily Bible studies, centering on the second chapter of the book of Acts. On the blackboard in the classroom, Ballagh wrote the fifteenth verse of Isaiah 32 and preached on the experience of Pentecost. There were approximately thirty young men there. Iglehart describes the mounting spiritual experience of these young men and states, "Day by day the spirit rose among these young men, as yet uncommitted to Christ, until finally they were on fire with earnestness, contrition and desire to

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<sup>3</sup>Akira Ebisawa, Nihon Kirisuto-kyo Hyakunen-shi (The Centennial History of Japanese Christianity) (Tokyo: Nihon Kirisuto Kyodan Shuppanbu, 1959), p. 73.

become Christians."<sup>4</sup> This was the beginning of the so-called Yokohama Band, often discussed in relationship to similar groups of young people "banded" together under missionaries' leadership and inspiration, such as the Kumamoto and Sapporo bands. The Yokohama Band, in which Samuel R. Brown, a former China missionary, already in his early fifties, had an extensive influence, together with Ballagh, served as a main source of power which led to the organization of the first Protestant church in Japan on March 10, 1872. This was Nihon Kirisuto Kokai, the Church of Christ in Japan.

The uniqueness of the Nihon Kirisuto Kokai was its ecumenicity and a simple evangelical faith at its offset. This probably was due to the influence of the missionaries who assisted in the formation of the church. Iglehart describes James C. Ballagh of the Reformed Church with these words and they are representative descriptions of the early missionaries. "He ranks among the 'greats' of the first period. His preeminence was in the field of Christian character, piety, prayer life, and a most humble assiduity in service to anyone in need."<sup>5</sup> Together with these personality traits, the early missionaries brought to Japan and to the early Christians a distinct style of faith and expressions of that faith. Their faith was clearly the product of the nineteenth century Protestant evangelistic zeal. "People were urged," describes

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<sup>4</sup>Iglehart, op. cit., p. 43.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

Professor Akio Dohi, "to listen to the Gospel of salvation in Christ, to grasp the gospel through the uplifting of the soul, to experience the conversion of the soul and regeneration of faith, to confess their sins, to commit themselves to God and to live with a strict ethical standard and a passionate piety."<sup>6</sup> The early missionaries, then, with their Puritanical zeal and piety, inspired by the missionary passion of the nineteenth century religious awakening, played a decisive role in shaping the content as well as the form of the Japanese church. The Nihon Kirisuto Kokai, as the prototype of the Church in Japan, clearly reflected its missionary leaders' religious heritage. The creed drawn up, largely taken from the one of the World Evangelical Alliance, and supplemented by other articles having to do with a code for living, explicitly takes the Bible as the revelation of God to be the standard for faith and life-style. This Bible-centered orientation was truly the core of the religious heritage with which Japanese Protestantism began its journey. It was in this life of the church that such a man as Masahisa Uemura found the calling to be a minister and to preach the biblical message.

The influx of new missionaries of various denominations in the 1870's led to development of Methodist, Congregational, Baptist, Anglican and later Lutheran churches, as well as numerous sectarian groups, by the end of the nine-

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<sup>6</sup>Akio Dohi, Nihon Protestantism Kyokai no Seiritsu to Tenkai (The organization and Development of Japanese Protestantism) (Tokyo: Nihon Kirisuto Kyodan Shuppanbu, 1975), p. 22.

teenth century. Though missionaries developed close friendships among themselves, transcending their denominational differences, an increasing diversity in theological and denominational orientations could not nurture the ecumenical spirit which characterized the very early period of missionary activity. They were eager, though not always successful, to facilitate, to raise and train indigenous leaders for the Church. In any case, their influence was unquestionably significant in shaping the life of the church in Japan. Their preaching style, starting with the early missionaries' New England Puritan orientation, left a lasting impact not only on young pastors of the Nihon Kirisuto Kokai but also on preachers of other churches. The preaching rising out of the Japanese soil, after the seed was planted by missionaries, was in general a straight, serious biblical preaching. Ballagh, for instance, on February 8, 1871, New Year's day by the old calendar, wrote "Isaiah 32, verse 15" and, using the Book of Acts, preached on the experience of the first Pentecost. Uemura, who was present, later recalled the sermon and the response Ballagh aroused among the people. Uemura records: "My friend A, who had never prayed publicly before, prayed and B followed. There were some who wept and prayed as if they were competing with each other."<sup>7</sup> Though the response of listeners described by Uemura has an emotional overtone, sermons delivered by Ballagh were seldom emotionally

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<sup>7</sup>Ebisawa, op. cit., p. 73.

oriented. But the commitment to the Bible emphasized and often preached by Ballagh and other missionaries became the dominant prototype for Protestant preaching in Japan.

Preachers: Personalities,  
Faith and Message

The historical context into which the Protestant faith was introduced in Japan was in flux socially and politically in the mid-nineteenth century. The faith brought to Japan by American missionaries reflected their background of the religious situation sweeping America at the time, characterized by the pietistic revivals, an austere Puritanism and a mounting intellectualism and idealism coming out of the New England Romanticism of Ralph Waldo Emerson. And the presence of men such as Captain Leroy Janes in Kumamoto and William Smith Clark, with their military experiences in the Civil War, together with missionaries sent by various missionary bodies in the United States, literally shaped the format of the Protestant faith in Japan.

Nothing is known as to the influence of the American preaching on the early missionaries to Japan. And yet it is not difficult to presume that they were familiar with the multiplicity of spiritual types and styles of preaching of the first half of nineteenth-century-America, where a sort of cult of the spoken word developed. Whether it was Eliphalet Nott (1773-1866), Lyman Beecher (1775-1863), Henry Ward Beecher (1813-1887), William Ellery Channing (1780-1842),

Charles Grandison Finney (1792-1875), Dwight L. Moody (1837-1899), Theodore Parker (1810-1860), or Phillips Brooks (1835-1893), these were American preachers who placed their threads into the fabric of homiletical orientation. We may assume that the early American Protestant missionaries to Japan reflected a variety of verbal and oral styles of communication and of religious beliefs and concepts. Whether or not they were able to master the Japanese language well enough to be eloquent in their preaching, they were not hesitant to expound their faith by spoken words. The simple fact is that their listeners, in many cases, were attentive to them and were inspired by the message they heard.

For the purpose of this study, seven Japanese Christians were selected as samples of generally recognized effective preachers in the framework of Japanese Protestantism. Masahisa Uemura and Danjo Ebina were two of the earliest converts who became respected ecclesiastical leaders as well as effective preachers. Kanzo Uchimura, though theologically educated, was never ordained, but instigated the Mukyokai (Non-Church) movement. He is included in this study because his lectures on the Bible were, in essence, preaching and his impact upon the Protestant Christian community in Japan was, and still is, significant. Gumpei Yamamuro and Toyohiko Kagawa were both men of the Social Gospel, though their spirituality was rooted in deep piety and fiery evangelical faith. They were preachers who were not confined to the institutional church. Zenda Watanabe was a biblical scholar



who carried on a preaching mission through his academic career, as well as in a local church ministry. Masahisa Suzuki is the most contemporary of the seven preachers. Though his unexpected death at the age of fifty-eight disrupted his mounting impact through his preaching upon the entire Christian community, he nevertheless stands as the best of post-war preachers in Japan.

Masahisa Uemura (1858-1925)

Masahisa Uemura was one of the first group of students who responded to Protestant missionaries beginning informal meetings in Yokohama, even before the lifting of the ban against Christianity in 1873. There was a series of prayer meetings and into this group came a few Japanese students. The meetings were filled with a unity of commitment which had a decided spiritual effect upon these young students, though there were some skeptics.

The baptism of ten persons in 1872 was a commemorative event. But it was in the following year, after Uemura had moved from Shunbunkan, a prefectural school, to the new tutorial school that Samuel R. Brown started in cooperation with Ballagh, that he was baptized a Christian. Uemura was then sixteen. When Brown's school merged with the Tsukiji Theological School and was named Icchi Theological Seminary, Uemura's education continued in the new setting. He was graduated from Icchi Tehological Seminary in June 1878. It was a natural course for him to become a minister of the Nihon Kirisuto Kokai,

the earlier referred to product of a cooperative effort of the missionaries of the American Presbyterian, Dutch Reformed and Scottish United Presbyterian churches, together with elders of the local Japanese churches.<sup>8</sup> Uemura was accepted into full ministerial status at the age of twenty-one.

His pastoral ministry began in 1879 at Shitaya Icchi Church. From there he pioneered Ichibancho Icchi Church in 1886, which later became Fujimicho Church. He served as its pastor from 1901 to his death in 1925 at the age of sixty-seven. But these were merely his formal ministerial positions. He was involved not only in various evangelistic efforts in local churches but also in the establishment of the Tokyo YMCA, in literary work, including the translation of the Old Testament, the revision of hymns, and in theological education, mainly as a professor at Meiji Gakuin and as the head of Nihon Shingakusha, the theological seminary for the Nihon Kirisuto Kyodai.

Faith and Message. Uemura was baptized by James C. Ballagh and studied under Ballagh as well as with Samuel R. Brown. Ballagh was a missionary of the Reformed Church and Brown was of the Dutch Reformed Church. Both of them were able men. Iglehart says of Ballagh that he was among the great people of the early period. Brown, too, was a superb teacher as well as a man capable of attracting and greatly

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<sup>8</sup>Iglehart, op. cit., p. 24.

inspiring young men.

Uemura's growth as a Christian seemed to directly reflect the influence of Brown and Ballagh. Thus his theological orientation, his style of faith and its expression were in the orthodox tradition of the reformed Church brought to Japan by early missionaries. That, too, was true of the entire church polity of the Nihon Kirisuto Kokai. There was a uniqueness in the Kokai and that was its commitment to ecumenicity and self-reliance. Though this uniqueness was due to the spirit missionaries had in those days, unfortunately it was also the denominationalism of the missionary enterprise itself which eventually caused the watering down of the ecumenical spirit in the Kokai. In general, however, Uemura, even in his own day, was regarded as the prominent defender of the orthodox faith of the Presbyterian-Reformed tradition.

Coming from a samurai background, Uemura brought with him a pattern common among the early converts to Protestantism in Japan, of the Neo-Confucian value system, commonly called bushido (the way of the warrior). This orientation was well integrated into the Puritanical heritage of the early missionaries in Japan who provided the theological and ethical framework for the young converts. Uemura was not entirely uncritical of the nationalistic spirit produced by bushido, but believed that this tradition (bushido), fed by many sources, including the simple piety of native Shinto, had true meaning and spiritual validity in the plan and

providence of God.<sup>9</sup>

Even with this fairly traditional Japanese value orientation, Uemura's Christian faith stood firm on the side of classical Protestant orthodoxy. This became clearly evident in his theological debate with Danjo Ebina, regarding the doctrines of the incarnation and redemption. In this turn-of-the century debate, while Ebina stood on the liberal spirit of the European and American scholars of his time and argued for scriptural interpretation on the ground of modern progressive thought, Uemura stood stoutly on the argument for Jesus Christ as the divine revelation, the deity of Christ, his omnipresence and immanence as the object of Christian worship. Ebina tended to take up the adoptionist view of Jesus as the Christ and Uemura stressed a literal incarnation view. In Katsuhisa Aoyoshi's words, "Mr. Ebina emphasizes learning from Christ. We believe in Him, are united to Him and dependent on and entrust ourselves to Him in life and in death."<sup>10</sup>

Thus Uemura laid the foundation for the mainstream of theological orientation for Japanese Protestantism. His theology centered around the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the son of God, the Savior, and he based his faith

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<sup>9</sup>Richard H. Drummond, A History of Christianity in Japan (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971) p. 210

<sup>10</sup>Katsuhisa Aoyoshi, Dr. Masahisa Uemura, a Christian Leader (Tokyo: Kyobunkwan, 1940), p. 190. Aoyoshi was one of Uemura's close associates. "We" here is interpreted as "Uemura and his associates."

in God on the essential, historic, apostolic tradition of New Testament Christianity. This faith was reflected directly in his preaching throughout his life.

His preaching: biblical, theological and expository.

Uemura's self-defined mission was to be an evangelist (dendo-sha) and at the same time a social informer (shakai no bokutaku). The latter indicates a sense of teaching ministry in the widest sense. A bokutaku is a wooden bell with clatters. The sound of a bokutaku indicates a visitor, a warning of approaching danger, a beginning of work and many other things. For Uemura, the emphases of his mission were inseparable and he carried out the mission through the pulpit and his publication work, primarily in the Fukuin Shimpo, a main source of theological information and news of the Nihon Kirisuto Kyokai. The bokutaku, in addition to the meanings mentioned above, also implies a great teacher. Uemura, who was an avid reader and well versed in the intellectual streams of Japan as well as of the western world, considered teaching, both in preaching and in journalistic expressions, to be vitally important. We may say that literary and homiletical elements overlapped in both areas of his "missionary" involvements.

Uemura's preaching was probably influenced by what he initially heard from missionaries. We may suspect that these missionaries were not so fluent in Japanese and that their preaching was not considered eloquent. Uemura's recollection, however, indicates that the preaching of the mis-

sionaries far exceeded their deficiency in the Japanese language.

Uemura was inspired by these preachings and yet the pulpit style he developed in his ministry was very much his own. Tsuneaki Kato, of Tokyo Union Theological Seminary, makes a stimulating analysis of Uemura's sermons and terms his style "expository preaching by a topical sermon method" or "a biblical topical sermon."<sup>11</sup> What Kato refers to here is Uemura's tendency to select a scripture passage and expound on it in relationship to concrete aspects of daily life by focusing on a limited subject or issue within that scriptural selection. There seems to have been no systematic exegesis as such, but exegetical knowledge and information were presented interpretatively. If Kato's typology is valid, then Uemura's sermons are basically topical sermons. Uemura tends to start out with specific scripture passages but exercises a great deal of freedom in utilizing his selections. His scriptural selections might be one verse or an entire story, or several verses at a time. There is no consistency.

A fragment of Uemura's homiletical concept is seen in his writing concerning worship, in his book, Life of Prayer, published in 1919. Much of the content of the book is sermons and through them we are able to detect how he grasped the task of preaching within the framework of worship. Insisting

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<sup>11</sup>Kato, Nippon no Sekkyoja Tachi (The Preachers of Japan) (Tokyo: Shinkyō, 1972), p. 57.

that preaching must be an integral part of a worship experience but should not dominate other elements involved, he says:

We should not overemphasize rituals and liturgy because the major task of the church is to interact with God. But the interaction must center around the altar. What is most important on the altar is not teachings but prayers, not preaching but praise, not admonition but confession.<sup>12</sup>

Here we find an interesting emphasis on the priestly function of a minister and the relationship of preaching to it. For Uemura, preaching was a testimony based upon the reality of Christ, to comfort, to encourage and to exhort that reality to as many people as possible.

Uemura was not an eloquent speaker. There was in his speech an element of stuttering and words did not come flowing to him. On one hand he was aware of this inadequacy and even to the end of his ministry he did not take the task of preaching for granted. On the other hand, he freely admitted that he loved to preach. Said he, "I love preaching. One may say it is love because of my poor hand at it. I admit that I love the task of preaching even if I am not very good at it nor have a great ability for it."<sup>13</sup> This frank admission, together with his awareness of awkwardness in speaking, indicates that Uemura was motivated, and worked hard, in preparing and delivering his sermons.

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 50. This quotation, which Kato uses, is taken from Wataru Saba, ed., Uemura Masahisa to Sono Jidai, (Masahisa Uemura and His Age), 7 vols. (Tokyo: Kyobunkwan, 1937-1944).

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

Kato makes another interesting analysis of Uemura's sermons. He quotes Yoshitaka Kumano, who said that Uemura's sermons were "theological sermons" in which theological thought and concepts are developed.<sup>14</sup> Kato, then, uplifts the principle of dialogue for Uemura's theological formation and its implication for preaching. The dialogical process in Uemura refers to the relationship (1) between a preacher and God, (2) between a congregation and God, with the minister as a mediator, and (3) between the preacher and the congregation.<sup>15</sup> This dialogical relationship was what made Uemura an authentically pastoral person. As one of his disciples stated, Uemura was not basically an evangelist but rather a pastor, and his preaching reflected that characteristic.<sup>16</sup> This disciple, Rinzo Onomura, makes a picturesque portrayal of Uemura as a preacher.

He might place his elbow on the lectern, his voice not always clear, the endings of his words somewhat blurred as he spoke with pauses. No wonder his listeners thought he was slow of speech. But once moved, emotionally fired up, there was a fervor in him which filled a sanctuary, his words penetrating the hearts of worshippers, not pleasantly but boldly, not smoothly but forcefully. The whole building would overflow with a sense of inspiration. He was not eloquent, but neither ever slow of speech.<sup>17</sup>

It was also this Onomura who said that in Uemura's preaching success and failure were clearly visible. Whether or not a sermon is a success needs to be carefully considered, but what Onomura means by his comment is that Uemura was a

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 60

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.



pastor and not an evangelistic minister so that when he was preaching to people he knew well he was tremendously effective in communicating his message. On the other hand, during his special mission trips, his effectiveness often did not reach the height of his capability. This dichotomy between a pastor and an evangelist is somewhat risky, but Onomura's use of the term "evangelist" probably refers to a "mass meeting evangelist."

In order to gain further insight into Uemura's preaching, it may be appropriate to take an example. Here a sermon entitled, "Do you love me?", preached in 1923, may serve well as one of his finest. Uemura showed an infinite interest in personalities. Though his sermons may be classified, as Kato has attempted to do, as topical sermons with a biblical expository method or, in more general terms, theological sermons, Uemura relied much on the use of concrete persons, either in the biblical record or in contemporary human history. Most of all, his visionary interest focused on the living reality of Jesus Christ and the people who lived and moved around Christ. The sermon, "Do you love Me?" has as subtitle, "As I read John 21...."<sup>18</sup> Here Uemura, already close to the end of his life, moves right into portraying the encounter between Peter and the resurrected Lord. And in elaborating on the familiar scene by the sea of Tiberias, Uemura comes to the question

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<sup>18</sup>Masahisa Uemura, Uemura Masahisa Sekkyoshu (Collection of Sermons by Masahisa Uemura) (Tokyo: Shinkyo, 1972), pp. 253-64.

of Jesus directed to Simon Peter, "...do you love me more than all else?" There he leaves the scriptural narrative and goes into the search for the meaning of "all else." Then he returns to Peter. At this point, Uemura picks up the meaning of love as seen in Peter and in Jesus. The message is clarified by the Letter of Paul to the Galatians, chapter 2, verse 20, emphasizing love as God incarnate in the resurrected Christ. He moves from his theological exposition to a more human understanding of love and the joy related to it. The First Letter of Peter, chapter 1, verse 8, is presented in relation to the Galatian expression. There must be, Uemura insists, an overflowing love in our obedience to Christ. The question of Jesus to Simon Peter, "Do you love me?" can be turned to "are you joyful? Do you have the will to follow Christ?" This relatively short sermon on the post-resurrection narrative is simply composed. Not all of Uemura's sermons are as short and descriptive as "Do you love me?" He also preached, in 1923, a lengthy sermon entitled "Who is Christ?" with twelve points for elaboration.<sup>19</sup> It is a systematic presentation of his christological view with the conclusion that the crucified Jesus is the Christ we must worship and the righteousness of God is manifested in the event of the cross. He finds that it is only in the crucifixion that we find God's forgiveness. This sermon was typical of his "theological sermons."

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., pp. 279-98.

A Prototype for Japanese Preaching. Uemura may be called the first orthodox Protestant leader in Japan. That orthodoxy was partly an inheritance from the Protestant missionaries of the early Meiji period, but also his cultural background with the Samurai ethics was integral in his own formation of Japanese orthodox Protestant faith. Here the orthodoxy is understood in the light of the historic faith, of the evangelical nature of the Church, of the emphasis upon the doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation, Atonement, the personality of the Holy Ghost, the Second Coming, the absoluteness of Christianity. Here was also the foremost exponent for the nationalization, or rather the indigenization, of the Christian faith into the religious and moral ferment and soil of Japan.

Aoyoshi quotes the comment of S. H. Wainright, a missionary contemporary of Uemura, who observed in Uemura a sort of prototype of a Japanese Protestant leader. Wainright says:

If a man's character be determined by the purpose which rules his life, no better index to Mr. Uemura's character can be found than in the aim to which his energies were unfailingly directed. His whole-hearted purpose was to further Christian life among individuals and society by means of the Church and its agencies. His aim was strictly Christian. His mind

was not distracted by other interests. His energies were not diverted into other channels. With untiring devotion and singleness of aim, and with earnest desire, he devoted himself to the Church and to its work and welfare. His public ministry remains as a classical example to all pastors of his devotion to the one great aim for which the Christian ministry was instituted by Christ himself.<sup>20</sup>

What Wainright saw in Uemura was a total commitment to the Christian calling by uncompromising faith in Jesus Christ and the Church as the essential body of Christ through which salvation is realized. The major means for Uemura to communicate his faith and to express his commitment was preaching. Thus whatever he did and in spite of numerous professional involvements he had, he was a pastor, and known to be so, throughout his life.

Uemura's preaching was based upon his understanding of pastoral care and ministry and fed by his dialogical spirit. This spirit must be understood in his own setting as a somewhat paternalistic pastoral existence, a pattern not uncommon even in the contemporary Japanese church scene. His dialogue was first and primarily with God through his serious encounter with the Bible. This dialogical relationship became meaningful through the concrete confrontation and encounter with the lives of his people in the church. His preaching, then, was a formulation based upon the cross-roads of two dialogical lines, one with God in the scriptures and the other with the congregation to which he was a pastor.

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<sup>20</sup> Aoyoshi, op. cit., p. 5.

The unique characteristic of Uemura's preaching is not only in his strongly pastoral posture but also in his significant effort to express the message of the Bible in understandable language. In the article entitled, "Hard to Understand Sermons" in Fukuin Shimpo of 1910, Uemura describes his effort to use "pure" Japanese in expressing the Gospel. He stresses that so much of the preaching of his day is difficult to understand because preachers use a "translation" mentality and are not able to indigenize Christian ideas and messages into the linguistically rich Japanese language.<sup>21</sup> Whether he himself was entirely successful in incarnating the Biblical message into effective Japanese and modes of thought is questionable. But there is no doubt that Uemura poured his effort into preaching to the needs of the people in his congregation within the frame of their mental and thought patterns, using the scriptural message which he thought would meet their spiritual needs. The central and absolute criterion for preaching was his commitment to God of the Bible and thus the format of preaching became that of a biblical-theological exposition. He was not an eloquent speaker but the integrity and commitment his people found in him made Uemura an unresistably attractive and dynamic Christian leader and his style set the tone for Japanese Protestant preaching for decades to follow.

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<sup>21</sup>Kato, op. cit., p. 61.

Danjo Ebina (1856-1937)

Ebina is often discussed in contrast to Uemura. Like Uemura, Danjo Ebina came from a samurai background. He was a member of the Kumamoto Band under the impact of Captain L. L. Janes, a West Point graduate and Civil War veteran. Janes did not formally teach Christianity but he was a man of vigorous conviction and his Christian character was evident to all of his students. Living during the complex period of Japan's national transition from the feudal age to the era of modernization, young samurai were eager to re-organize their spiritual orientation. The rise of the so-called bands was partly due to the ethos of the day. Ebina was among thirty-five of Janes' students who met at the top of Hanaoka mountain in Kumamoto at dawn, one morning in 1876. There the students signed the Declaration of Belief in Christianity. "It was couched in terms of national liberty, and yet had in it the drive of a universal Christian faith."<sup>22</sup>

Together with other members of the Kumamoto Band, Ebina moved up to Kyoto to study, at the school newly established by Joseph Neeshima, when Janes' school was abruptly closed. There at Doshisha, Ebina was exposed to the charismatic personality of Neeshima with his vibrant faith, nurtured in the New England environment of Amherst College and Andover Theological Seminary, and to the able, scholarly

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<sup>22</sup>Iglehart, op. cit., p. 51.

guidance of a missionary professor Jerome D. Davis. The students from Kumamoto found in Neeshima a common bond because Neeshima, too, was of the samurai background. And there was from the beginning an air of openness in the search for truth under Neeshima's leadership. Together with his comrades from Kumamoto days (Tokio Yokoi, Tsurin Kanamori, Tsuneteru Miyagawa, Hiromichi Kozaki and others), Ebina was exposed to the study of the Bible and theology and eventually entered the ministry of the Congregational Church of Japan.

As an effective minister of churches in Annaka, Kumamoto, Kobe and Tokyo, Ebina was not free of controversy. The frequent contrast made with Uemura is due to the heated theological debate on incarnation that the two men carried on at length in 1901. Aoyoshi, in 1935, observed that the debate was the most significant theological issue to that day. It is possible to say today that the Uemura-Ebina debate still stands as the most outstanding theological discussion done in public in the history of the Japanese Protestantism of the past century. As Charles H. Germany summarizes, "Ebina, who died in 1937, represents the position of more radical liberalism, at times striking at the heart of the central doctrines of the person and work of Christ, the nature of salvation, and the Trinity."<sup>23</sup> Together with this liberal orientation and the definite personality differences between the two,

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<sup>23</sup>Charles H. Germany, Protestant Theologies in Modern Japan (Tokyo: International Institute for the Study of Religions Press, 1965), p. 19.

Ebina and Uemura became symbolic images of the not-so-unified Protestant Christianity of their day.

His theological direction. Ebina, was, from the beginning, one of the pillars of the Japan Congregational Church. More than being an ecclesiastical leader or a systematic theologian, he led the Congregationalists as an eloquent preacher. But his preaching was closely tied to his liberal theological inclination. Ebina contained within himself an interesting complex of value orientation. He was raised in the samurai environment with its Confucian ethical discipline. This also involved a strong nationalist sentiment, related to the Meiji restoration process, in which an emphasis upon moral conscience was often focused more upon national interest than upon one's relationship to God and to his/her neighbors. And his exposure to Christianity, first through Janes in Kumamoto and then later through Neeshima and his colleagues at Doshisha, added a new dimension to his understanding of conscience by providing an element of transcendence. There was also his exposure to liberalism, through which his impressionable personality was opened to a variety of experiences as a means for searching out truth. Extremely subjective at times, Ebina showed persistent "willingness to trust fundamentally his own experience in the formation of theological concepts and convictions."<sup>24</sup> Such subjectivity may seem contrary to his liberal orientation. His emphasis

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 22.



upon experiential realities was a sort of protest against a seemingly dogmatic stress upon doctrinal approach to the Christian faith, which he resisted with passion.

The liberal spirit to which he adhered was evident most clearly in his effort to utilize scientific methods and data in understanding and grasping the truth contained in the Bible as well as in all human realities. He made a conscious effort to be historical and scientific. As Sakuzo Yoshino, in his impression of Ebina's preaching, stated, Ebina spoke on "mystical religious issues with the sharpness of the knife of history and science."<sup>25</sup>

Ebina's most distinctive theological stance, says Germany, was related to his concepts of the Trinity and Atonement. Germany states:

Ebina outlined his conviction that the traditional Christian doctrine of the Trinity in essential structure is an appropriation into Christian faith of early Greek philosophy. The appropriation he saw as defensible on the grounds that it was natural for the early Christian thinkers to participate in this way in the thought forms of the day. The structure of the Trinity provided a satisfactory frame of reference for the solution to problems such as the origin of evil, the relationship of evil to good, and the process of creation.<sup>26</sup>

Here we see an indication of Ebina's thinking. He did take scientific concepts and methodology seriously, and thus a clash against more orthodox streams within the church was inevitable. His understanding of the Incarnation was, in essence, a form of adoptionism. For Ebina, the holy spirit

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<sup>25</sup>Kato, op. cit., p. 198.

<sup>26</sup>Germany, op. cit., p. 23.

was the inspiring "energy" of Jesus, pre-existent and eternal with the Father and the Son. And in his understanding of Atonement, he insisted that evil must not be grasped as something outside God. Ebina recognized, explains Germany, that sin is serious, but saw no need for the believer to become depressed over sin as evil. Evil, in the form of sin, was seen as necessary for the emergence and development of reason. Sin, therefore, plays an educative and saving role, according to Ebina's argument.<sup>27</sup> There was a tendency to see sin in a moralistic realm. Here again, this was probably due to the lack of a drastic experience of sin and a sense of sinfulness in Ebina himself. In his insistence upon the essential goodness of man and his power and God as the provider of that goodness, Ebina was not particularly interested in probing sin as one of his theological concerns.

For Ebina, the sole and absolute criterion was Christ. Christ was the ultimate source of moral inspiration. The ultimate power that a person can know is found in the life and death of Christ. The ultimate of love and holiness was and is made known and concrete in Christ. This Christ is approachable by every human being through his/her faith and it is possible for a committed person to experience a mystical union with God through Christ. In this sense, Christ for Ebina was the Ultimate Person.

Ebina, in many ways, was an inconsistent man. His

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

commitment to the scientific methodology on one hand and immersion in the salvational reality in Christ on the other, produced discrepancies on occasion. He tried to be rational and attempted to transcend some issues and concepts by subjective pronouncement. But there was in Ebina an insatiable passion to make sense out of his faith and to communicate his understanding and experience of faith to his people in their setting. It was natural for him to probe into the historical religions of Japan, Buddhism in particular, and to see the cultural and historical elements of Japan in intimate relationship with the biblical faith.

His preaching: Ideological, topical and experiential.

Ebina was an eloquent and persuasive preacher. His eloquence may have been the result of Janes' emphasis upon oratory. Of course, Janes' was in English but Ebina felt the impact of verbal persuasiveness in his early days in Kumamoto. During the famous Uemura-Ebina debate, though Ebina's logic was not as solidly organized as that of Uemura, he was able to arouse much enthusiasm among the hearers because of his persuasive eloquence. One commentator described Ebina as an orator and said that "his accent accurate and clear and sharp, his voice sounds like a silver bell."<sup>28</sup> He was not the only voice of eloquence in the church circles of his day, but his presentations were known for the philosophical overtone which

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<sup>28</sup>Kato, op. cit., p. 183.

impressed many of his listeners. At least in his delivery, and style, he was highly considered, even by secular standards.

But there was something more than the command of delivery which made Ebina an effective preacher. Ebina was by nature a passionate personality. But he was also of a samurai family and there was a tendency to a self-imposed discipline for self-assertion. A reader of his sermons is able to detect passionate out-reach to his listeners but self-controlled style of expression. Whether it was due to Ebina's caution against emotionalism or because of his eagerness to present the faith in Christ in rational format, one is not quite sure. What is clear in Ebina's sermons is an educative process. Ebina considered preaching to be a facilitative and educative process through which each person is awakened and aroused, both intellectually and spiritually, to stand on his/her own footing for the religious quest for truth. What he expected of his people in his ministry was for each person to experience the reality of Christ, as he had experienced it.

The controversial nature of his personality was often the cause of misunderstanding in the organizational structure of the Christian church in Japan, but the members of his church found his preaching steadily provocative. His preaching was not in the traditional pattern of biblical preaching. His main thrust was to uplift the experiential Christ and thus his scriptural usage, too, was centered around that purpose. He did not seem to care much about other portions

and parts of the Bible. Not only did he pick and choose the scriptural sources, but he relied heavily on any historic doctrines, philosophies, documents and events to sharpen his focus on the living spirit of Christ. In Kato's words, "Ebina loved and cherished Christ more than the Bible, the Church or doctrines."<sup>29</sup> This is observable, even in sermon titles of Ebina, such as "The Immanent Christ", "The Christianity of Christ", or "The Baby of God."

As a preacher, Ebina exerted a more dynamic spirituality than Uemura. But Ebina was not as much a pastor as Uemura. Antei Hiyane commented that there was the noticeable widening of a gap between Ebina as a preacher and his congregation, beginning around World War I.<sup>30</sup> A lack of sufficient pastoral care was not the only cause for the alienation between the two. In 1919 Ebina, with his wife, took a lengthy trip to Europe. His experience of exposure to the war-torn part of the world was not only soul-shaking but was an ideological and religious trial. Upon his return to Japan, his preaching took on a decisive tone of internationalism and humanitarianism. At the same time, there was a definite resurgence of evangelicalism among Japanese Protestants. Ebina was unable to close the widening gap as he was increasingly caught up in the universality of the Christian faith.

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 201.

<sup>30</sup>Antei Hiyane, Kyokai Sanjūgonin Zo (Thirty-five Figures of the Church) (Tokyo: Kyobunkwan, 1959), p. 50.

This was a significant shift from his eagerness in earlier days to find the Japanese coloration and orientation for his faith. And yet there was an unceasing and unchanging tone of optimism in Ebina. This, too, was not an element for popularity in post-World War I Japan.

It is not difficult to make critical remarks about Ebina as a preacher. Kato summarizes well those voices heard during Ebina's life-time as well as after his death. Ebina's sermons, says Kato, had a number of shortcomings:

There was a lack in his sermons of nurture for a church fellowship. There was a leaning toward an ideological and philosophical emphasis, a conscious denial of church traditions or indifference toward such traditions. He did not make the Bible a fundamental and essential resource, nor did he rely on the church doctrines. What he relied on was basically 'simple but vivid experiences of religious consciousness and thought.'<sup>31</sup>

Presenting this summary, Kato, however, is not endorsing these criticisms completely. As Kato recognizes, Ebina's dominant drive in preaching was to let Christ be lifted, to let Christ speak for himself. There are doubts about whether he was always successful in that aim, as the points of criticism indicate. But there are numerous testimonies which indicate that many people heard him gladly. On occasion, the attendance at Hongo Yumicho Church, where he served his last pastorate, had a Sunday morning worship attendance of 700. Even today no church in Japan has such an attendance. A visitor's comment indicated that the congregation often

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 187.

laughed at Ebina's remarks but as he reached the concluding section of the sermon the listeners experienced an elevating spiritual tension.<sup>32</sup>

Search for a "Japanese" preaching. Ebina was a colorful person. For many people he was inspiring and dynamic. The controversies centering around him were basically theological and ideological and an objective analysis of his preaching is difficult without a careful consideration of those elements. Whether positively or negatively, his preaching aroused people out of their complacency into seriously looking at their own faith and values. His free spirit in presenting the scriptural truth, in order to uplift and clarify the living image of Christ, was shocking to his listeners on occasion, but liberated people to an imaginative and creative theological thinking. His constant inclusion of the traditional and historical values, events, literature and religions in a dialogical process with his faith in Jesus Christ was somewhat subjective at times but was a serious challenge to the dogmatically inclined evangelical orientation of early Protestantism in Japan. More than any other church leader of his day, Ebina was eager and committed to comprehending the Christian faith within the contextual reality of Japan.

Ebina was a tall and husky man, with his well-groomed beard, reports Fumio Iwai--an attractive and impressive man.

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 229.

There was a tone in his preaching which reminded one of the eloquence of Beecher.<sup>33</sup> He did not excel in organizing people but was superb in an educative process by presenting stimulating insights. His contemporary, a highly respected church leader himself, Hiromichi Kozaki, called him "a possessor of great inspiration, committedly religious, eloquent and a hard worker."<sup>34</sup> He seemed to lack finesse in diplomatic tactics, but his straight-forwardness in presenting his views and convictions with appropriate words and expressions, understandable and relevant within the cultural context of Japan, was effectively communicable even to non-Christian circles.

He was appointed chancellor of the Doshisha in 1920 at the age of sixty-five. An unfortunate fire at Doshisha, during the visit of the Emperor to Kyoto in 1928, forced his resignation and he returned to Tokyo to spend his remaining years, still active in preaching his favorite pronouncement, "I am in my Father, and you in me and I in you." (John 14:20)

#### Kanzo Uchimura (1861-1930)

Questions might be raised as to the selection of Kanzo Uchimura as a subject of study in Japanese preaching. If preaching is understood to be, as Blackwood insists, as "divine truth through personality or the truth of God voiced

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<sup>33</sup>Fumio Iwai, Ebina Danjo (Tokyo: Nihon Kirisuto Kyodan Shuppankyoku, 1973), p. 285.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.



by a chosen personality to meet human needs,"<sup>35</sup> Uchimura cannot be eliminated from Japanese church history as one of the most significant preachers.

Kanzo Uchimura was born to the samurai class of the Matsudaira clan in 1861. Thus he stands with Uemura and Ebina as a group of elite young men who found in Christianity a new direction for their youthful passion to participate in the process of modernization of their nation. While Uemura was exposed to a group of devout missionaries and Ebina was confronted by a disciplined military man, Janes, in Kumamoto, Uchimura encountered on the island of Hokkaido an academician, William S. Clark, President of the State Agriculture College in Massachusetts. Clark came to Japan to start an agriculture college for the economic development of the northern island at the invitation of its governor, and spent only eight months teaching sixteen young men, including Uchimura. Clark was a layman but devoted to the Bible and offered prayer every morning before giving lectures. The impact of his personality was significant. Before Clark returned to his post in Massachusetts, all of his first class of sixteen confessed their faith and signed the Covenant of Believers in Jesus. This was the beginning of the rather stormy life of Uchimura as a Christian.

Uchimura was baptized by M. C. Harris of the Methodist Church in 1878. Upon completing his study of marine biology

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<sup>35</sup>Andrew W. Blackwood, The Preparation of Sermons (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1948), p. 13.

he entered the service of the government of Hokkaido, but eventually found his way to Amherst College for further study. There he met President Julius H. Seeley, who left upon Uchimura a deep imprint of inspiration through his intellectual and spiritual competency and maturity. It was Seeley who directed Uchimura out of spiritual introversion and made Christ's presence real to him. From Amherst he went to Hartford Theological Seminary and eventually back to Japan, where he entered the teaching profession rather than the professional ministry. It was during his teaching career at the First High School, an elite government preparatory institution, that he became the focus of sensational reactions when he refused to bow to the scroll on which the Imperial Rescript on Education was written. This explicit expression of his Christian conviction that one does not bow to and worship anything but God, not only led to his forced resignation but also initiated many years of nation-wide controversy related to the problem of religion and education.

Uchimura led the rest of his life studying the Bible and writing prolifically on that study, insisting that the essence of Christian faith is radical dependence on the biblical message of the Gospel and that an ecclesiastical organization is not a necessity for a person's salvation of soul. This conviction brought him to leadership of the movement called Mu-Kyokai, or the Non-Church, holding lectures, Bible classes, discussions and prayer meetings in private homes or in rented halls. Though the majority of people who

participated in Uchimura's meetings were from the intelligentsia, the impact left by Uchimura is still clearly felt throughout the Christian community in Japan and beyond. The radical simplification of the organized aspect of Christianity, the commitment to and immersion in the study of the Bible and the strong sense of independence from any secular authority are the characteristics of Uchimura's movement, which continues to exist as a uniquely Japanese form of Christian faith. Uchimura died at the age of sixty-eight in 1929 and upon his tomb stone are inscribed his own words:

I for Japan;  
Japan for the World;  
The World for Christ  
And All for God<sup>36</sup>

His preaching: Biblical throughout. Uchimura as a person was not an easy man to understand or to work with. There was a grain of genius in him, wrote Soho Tokutomi in his recollections.<sup>37</sup> His rich intellectual capability and sharp insight made him both a uniquely stimulating mind to students of the Bible, as well as to Christians both in and out of the Church, on one hand, and on the other a controversial personality, who was considered a man of righteousness but not of love.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Kanzo Uchimura, Uchimura Kanzo Nikki Shokan Zenshu (Collection of Kanzo Uchimura's diary and letters) (Tokyo: Kyobunkwan, 1940), IV, 432.

<sup>37</sup>Toshiro Suzuki, ed., Kaiso no Uchimura Kanzo (Kanzo Uchimura as Remembered) (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1963), p. 4.

<sup>38</sup>Kiyomoto Suda, "Niishima to Uchimura" (Neeshima and Uchimura) Kirisuto Shimbun (Christ Weekly), July 29, 1978, p. 2.

Not finding his calling in an ecclesiastical structure, Uchimura spent his life writing and lecturing, through which he participated in preaching in its widest sense. Though he earned a part of his living by writing for secular publications, his major effort was concentrated in his own periodical, Seisho no Kenkyu (The Study of the Bible) and related conferences, lectures and home meetings. It is through his writings that a probe into his preaching is made possible. Though he was asked to fill vacant pulpits on occasion, his study and lectures on the Bible were as effective as the vibrant pulpit voices of Uemura and Ebina.

A part of his major drive to probe into the Bible was his patriotic affection and concern for Japan. Drummond describes Uchimura and says,

Few if any men of the time were more emotionally, as well as intellectually, committed to patriotic service to their country than Uchimura, but on the basis of his Christian faith he conceived and worked out his understanding of what was his patriotic duty.<sup>39</sup>

And a part of that patriotic duty was to be a social critic. He soon decided, however, that his own calling was in the area of biblical scholarship and in providing the fruits of his study for the needs of people of his time.

The publication of Seisho no Kenkyu began in 1900 and continued to the time of his death. His patriotic sentiment was, in essence, more than sentiment. It was rooted in his constant search to find the authentic point of contact

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<sup>39</sup>Drummond, op. cit., p. 204.

between Christian faith and the spiritual soil of Japan. For Uchimura the point of contact is not static but is an incarnational process of the truth of the Gospel rooting down in Japan to produce the fruit of the Spirit. The persistent question is how that process is promoted. Uchimura was a scientist by training and he was immersed in developing that process which may be called "indigenization" in contemporary terminology.

The process of indigenizing the Christian faith was the common theme for many of the early Christians, as this study has observed in Uemura and Ebina. The motivating force behind their interest was not a mere nationalistic fervor but an eagerness to dissect the culture to see positive and negative factors and to help the positive to interact with the Gospel in order to develop active values for nation-building. His own writing inscribed on his tomb stone, "I for Japan, Japan for Christ...." is the symbolic expression of Uchimura, along with such terms as "representative men of Japan" and "Japan and Japanese," both of which are titles of his articles. It becomes clearer in his advocacy of the "principle of grafting." Kiyoko Takeda considers this concept intriguing and says that in it we find Uchimura's religious approach to his country. He sees his country as a stock to which he as a branch is grafted.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>Kiyoko Takeda, "Kirisutokyo no Dochaku to Uchimura Kanzo" (Uchimura and the Indigenization of Christianity) Geppo (Monthly Newsletter) for Uchimura Kanzo Nikki Shokan Zenshu (see footnote 36), IV. (1965).

The process of grafting here is different from a religious syncretism. Uchimura's argument is that when a branch is grafted to a stock, it dies before new life is given to it in order to be true both to the nature of that branch and to that of the stock. Uchimura was anxious to find in himself authenticity as a Japanese and it was to that authentic self that he wanted to welcome Christ through whom the old self dies once in order to gain a truly authentic selfhood.

Such was the idea with which he went through a spiritual devouring of the Bible. The monthly publication of Seisho no Kenkyu was to reach number 357 at its termination upon Uchimura's death. In addition there were some sixty books, pamphlets and magazines by his pen. But there was something extraordinary about his lectures, which we may consider preaching. He consistently conducted two study meetings each Sunday at his home and later at a hall adjacent to his house. Though he did conduct public meetings in the latter part of his life, renting public halls, where he gathered nearly one thousand in his audience on occasion, his basic pattern was a small group study based upon intimate relationship within that group. It was not an open meeting. Uchimura insisted upon faithful attendance and if a member were absent more than twice without reason, he was excluded from further study. Tadao Yanaihara, one of Uchimura's disciples and at one time the president of Tokyo University, states that he had to wait one year before he was permitted

into the group.<sup>41</sup>

Uchimura's style of preaching was thoroughly that of biblical exegesis, except in public lectures and speeches, in which he excelled at selecting a topic and sharpening his focus on it with skillful use of illustrations from his wide knowledge of the Western world and scholarship. Most of his public speeches were done in intellectually-oriented settings and he was effective in luring young minds to the process of rational encounter with the Bible and with live issues of the world. His delivery was slow and deliberate, the content presented rationally and with order. His scientific background must have affected his speech style. But there was a prophetic tone in him so that on occasion "he spoke with an impassioned eloquence and at other times raised the voice of reproach."<sup>42</sup> His speaking was a reflection of his writing which was "clear, concise, forceful and crisply organized."<sup>43</sup>

His presentation of the biblical study had an orthodox evangelical foundation. He was initiated into it by Clark in Sapporo but took three major stages in its maturation. In his own words we find the summary of the maturation process:

The first stage was when I knew that God is one.  
The second stage was when I believed in redemption

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<sup>41</sup>Tadao Yanaihara, Uchimura Kanzo to Tomoni (Together with Kanzo Uchimura) (Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 1963), p. 501.

<sup>42</sup>Shuen Kuwata, "Uchimura Kanzo to Uemura Masahisa" (Kanzo Uchimura and Masahisa Uemura) Geppo (monthly newsletter) for Uchimura Kanzo Nikki Shoka Zenshu (see footnote 36, I (1962)).

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

through the cross of Christ and the last stage came when I accepted the Second Coming of Christ at the end of the world to judge and to pronounce the beginning of heaven.<sup>44</sup>

It is possible to consider that this orthodox faith was fed by his biblical scholarship but on the other hand his scholarship was often determined and directed by that faith. This was an unavoidable mutuality, which is inevitable to some degree in all Christians. But Uchimura's primary concern was to clarify and to establish the Gospel in Japanese soil and its own spirituality and culture, to strip away "alien" elements not helpful in bringing the two "J's" together--Jesus and Japan. The study of the Bible became the primary expression of faith and the Non-Church movement developed around this concept. The Non-Church is not the denial of the validity of religious organizations but, as W. H. H. Norman defined it, "any group of people, unconnected with a church, who study the Bible and Christianity."<sup>45</sup> Norman's definition, however, is too general and does not portray Uchimura's Non-Church, Mu-Kyokai. Uchimura's argument stressed that a pure Christianity that loves God and man is achievable without ecclesiastical systems and institutional bindings. Uchimura's emphasis upon the study of the Bible as the sole means for attaining salvation, however, does not deny the value of a community of believers. In actuality, Mu-Kyokai groups had a high degree

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<sup>44</sup>Suda, op. cit.

<sup>45</sup>Carl Michalson, Japanese Contributions to Christian Theology (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), p. 19.



of sense of community. As Yanaihara described Mu-Kyokai, it is an "assembly of Christians, a congregation of believers filled with the Spirit,"<sup>46</sup> and in Sekine's words, "the koinonia with God and Christ."<sup>47</sup>

Uchimura thus held that what is essential to Christian faith is radical dependence on the Gospel. "His aim in so teaching was not to oppose the existing churches but to develop for Christian people a form of Christianity that would incorporate the spirit of the Reformation at a clearer, deeper level."<sup>48</sup> His preaching, then, was done in a form of biblical study, in a lecture format, to a selected group of people bound by Uchimura's charismatic personality and unique concept in understanding Christian faith in the Japanese cultural context. The cohesive power rests with the Bible. For Mu-Kyokai people, preaching means to let the Bible speak for itself. That, of course, is theory. A student of the history of Mu-Kyokai can easily select a number of effective leaders, through whom the Bible "spoke its words." And for many of the Mu-Kyokai people, Uchimura still continues his preaching through his writings, contained in Zenshu (the Complete Works of Uchimura Kanzo).<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>Norihisa Suzuki, "Christianity," in Ichiro Hori (ed.) Japanese Religion (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1972), p. 82.

<sup>49</sup>The total of twenty-five volumes was published by the Kyobunkwan.

The impact of Uchimura upon Japanese preaching.

Uchimura was a fringe person in terms of the institutional church in Japan. His unhappy experiences, mainly with missionaries, in his younger days seem to have left a permanent resistance against organized Protestantism. There was also a strong sense of nationalistic fervor in him which was not fanatical, but rather expansive in the light of the universal nature of the Christian faith. More than being merely objective in his biblical scholarship, Uchimura made the Bible the sole criterion for faith. The Bible is the source of our knowledge about God and the Son, Jesus Christ. It describes man's true nature, made in the image of God, yet corrupted by rebelliousness toward the Creator. It tells us of our environment, nature, originating in the creative love of God. And, finally, it contains answers for the solution of life's predicament. Thus the Bible is the source of revelation of salvation for all people.

Uchimura's conviction of faith and his own intellectual capability, the depth of faith, the sometimes harsh but totally charismatic personality, worked together to establish a uniquely effective style of communication among the intelligentsia and white-collar class. His systematic presentation of biblical exegesis and free exposition of it carried a tone of authority and seemed to meet the mental framework of Confucian-oriented Japanese sensitivity toward ethics and religion. As Drummond notes, nearly all Japanese pastors have in their book-shelves the voluminous set of Uchimura's

works.<sup>50</sup>

We may be able to see in Uchimura the strengths and weaknesses of Japanese Protestant preaching which he unknowingly developed as a prototype. The strengths are in (1) the consistent maintenance of focus upon the Bible as the unique characteristic of Christian preaching in comparison to other religious instruction and discourse; (2) the use of scientific knowledge, methodology and sensitivity in reading and studying the Bible; and (3) the simplification of the setting in which preaching is done so that the voice of God, heard through the preaching, is uplifted. The weaknesses are related to the strengths just described. The reverence for the Bible, whether taken as verbal inspiration or understood with the most scientific literary criticism, among Mu-Kyokai people becomes almost a type of idolatry. Here the authority of the Bible is isolated from the Church as the community of believers. This may be helpful in keeping the Bible free of legalistic manipulation, but there is danger of interpretative anarchy. In the case of Uchimura and his followers, the biblical study became so personality-centered in Uchimura himself. Though the Mu-Kyokai leaders have repeatedly emphasized that their interpretation of the Bible is not individual, their near-complete adherence to Uchimura's writings on the Bible reminds us of a "canonization" process. (4) Depth in understanding of the worship of God is vague in Uchimura. Because he did

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<sup>50</sup>Drummond, op. cit., p. 207.

not call his Bible study meetings a worship experience, how the exalted Christ becomes the Lord of life through one's study of the Bible in relationship to others, his/her neighbors, is the question we must raise here as we consider the historic meaning of worship.

As Carl Michalson recognized and described in detail the uniqueness of Uchimura and his movement, Kanzo Uchimura was a significant figure in Japanese Protestantism. His unintended impact upon preaching in Japan, inclusive of his strengths and weaknesses, must be carefully dealt with in order for us to foresee the future of Protestant preaching in Japan.

#### Gumpei Yamamuro (1872-1940)

If this writer were given the task of selecting the most effective preacher in the one-hundred odd years' history of Japanese Protestantism, the one who reached the widest possible spread of society, he would have difficulty choosing between Gumpei Yamamuro and Toyohiko Kagawa, who thought highly of each other and kept an intimate friendship. The focus of their evangelistic ministry was upon the common people, sociologically the lower strata of the middle-class down to the oppressed lower class workers and the socially deprived. This does not mean that the two men were unable to reach others. It is not at all uncommon to come across political, social and intellectual leaders in the contemporary scene who refer to Yamamuro or Kagawa, or both, as a source

of inspiration in their younger days.

Unlike Uemura and Ebina, Yamamuro came from a poor farming family in Okayama, the youngest of eight children. At the age of nine he was adopted by his uncle who provided an extensive orientation into Confucian teachings. Running away to Tokyo at age fifteen, he became a worker in a printing shop and continued his study at night schools. It was during this period that Yamamuro came across a group of young Christians calling themselves "Fukuin-kai" (The Gospel Band) and was exposed to the Bible and the Christian message. This was a shockingly refreshing experience for him when he was struggling with a variety of temptations among young workers at his printing shop. Thus his introduction to Christianity was first of all on a moral ground. His almost instant immersion into church activities indicates the type of personality Yamamuro possessed. A secular analyst might consider him a simple-minded man. A Christian evaluator may term him "pure in heart." An example of his attractively naive personality is found in the story of his being refused baptism by the minister of the Tsukiji Fukuin-kai. In his eagerness to be cleansed of sin and accepted to the life of service in Christ, he crawled out to a roof-top during a heavy rain, disrobing himself and praying, considering himself baptized.

Such a humorous incident is indicative of the man Yamamuro. During his sixty-eight years of life, until his death in 1940, Yamamuro was completely devoted to his work as an officer of the Salvation Army in Japan, not the founder

but in actuality the sole pillar of that Army in making the Gospel concrete and real to the "common people." The Common People's Gospel became one of the best-sellers. Toyohiko Kagawa used it in his meetings with the people of Shinkawa slum in Kobe.

His message: The Good News to the poor. Analyzing types of young people caught in the social turmoil of the Meiji Restoration, Motoi Takamichi presents two major groups.<sup>1</sup> One is the group of youth bearing the heaviness of ethos in rapid social transition, eagerly searching for a replacement for a spiritual and ethical vacuum, and once discovering such a replacement, concentrating devoutly on being successful and finding their places in society. The majority of young men coming from samurai background would be within this category. Yamamuro belonged to another group, much smaller in size, probably, but made up of unique personalities and individualities. There was no eagerness to integrate the Western reflection introduced on a massive scale in this group, but the Western intellectual pattern was taken up in order to critically encounter the feudal mentality and social climate of Japan. The majority of young Christians in the early Meiji era may be included within this group. There were some diversities of posture among them. Basically it was the matter of Confucian orientation as the criterion for human relationships and value-decisions. This orientation had an effect upon

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<sup>1</sup>Motoi Takamichi, Yamamuro Gumpei (Tokyo: Nihon Kirisuto Kyodan Shuppankyoku, 1973), p. 33.

one's outlook on the composition of society and the dynamics involved within that society.

Yamamuro's insight and argument was different. Though he was trained in Confucian teachings under his uncle's supervision, he squarely challenged the traditional vertical pattern of society and its human relational dynamics in Japan. While young Christian men out of this group went into ministry and formulated well-organized churches, taking leadership positions in the establishment of Protestantism, they were unable, in general, to reach men and women of labor, or of low social privilege and status. Yamamuro, too, was organizationally oriented. The Salvation Army he led had a very effective structure. His concept of ministry, however, was not intellectual or organizational. What determined Yamamuro's ministry and preaching was the existential reality of people to whom he felt the call to make the Gospel a living power. The message of the Gospel was clear to him and the recipients of that Gospel were clearly men and women of the streets and factories.

Yamamuro's message was a straightforward, simple and direct appeal to every person to enter the sanctified life in Christ, to convey the love of Christ in active demonstration to the least, the poorest and the downtrodden, to be united in Christ through the redemptive power of the Cross. The work of Christ must be understood through two pillars: redemption and holiness. These pillars are the doctrinal foundations of the Salvation Army but they gained new dimensions in Yamamuro.

Both redemptive renewal of life and its fruit as holiness evolve around the cross of Jesus Christ. Our commitment to the cross is much more than a moral and ethical act, insists Yamamuro. It is an unavoidable decision for all people if they are to be saved from the corrupt state of sinful life and be accepted as God's children. It is a faithful adherence to historic evangelicalism.

Yamamuro's effort was consistent throughout his life toward making the simple message of the Gospel not simplified but communicable in the historic reality to not-so-sophisticated, intellectual and religious groups of people.

Preaching for the Church militant. Yamamuro did not have an opportunity to be trained for oratory. If he had any schooling for public speaking, it was done in activities and programs of the church groups. And the content of his speaking was the Bible and men and women's need for the living message of the scriptures. Whether he was speaking as a young Salvation Army officer or as a social reformer against the prostitution system, his public speaking was in essence preaching. From the very first phase of his Christian life, he was out on the streets preaching. Though street-corner preaching was common among Christians of various orientations, there were often incidents of disruption and interference by passers-by or by people of non-Christian religious groups. But for Yamamuro nothing was an obstacle. As a matter of fact, the tough encounters with opposition became in reality



a training experience for the future field strategy for the Salvation Army.

He was a street preacher, whether that preaching was done indoors or out. And this factor affected the content and style of his preaching. Any listener was able to understand what Yamamuro was saying. A number of recollections describing the impressions of his preaching are worth noting. Buho Yamamuro quotes the writer, Iwasaburo Okino, who said, "He was not like many Christian preachers. There was nothing overpowering in him as though he were going to teach something to his listeners."<sup>52</sup> Suda Kiyomoto of Maebaghi commented, "Mr. Yamamuro's preaching was usually easy and rhythmic, using appropriate illustrations, often humorous, but he always touched listeners' hearts.... We could sense his noble personality clearly in his eloquence."<sup>53</sup> These observations were not exceptional. There seemed to be no pretentiousness or dramatics in Yamamuro but his whole being was communicated to his listeners as he usually concluded his preaching in the last five minutes with a passionate appeal for a commitment to holy living. There are innumerable accounts of his listeners in tears responding to Yamamuro's words. The response was not all emotional but no one among Protestant preachers in Japan has been able to arouse people's souls and emotional affirmation as much as Gumpei Yamamuro.

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<sup>52</sup>Buho Yamamuro, Jindo no Senshi Yamamuro Gumpei (The Warrior for Humanity Gumpei Yamamuro) (Tokyo: Tamagawa Daigaku Shuppanbu, 1969), p. 261.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 262.

Yamamuro gained his skill in verbal communication on the street corners. Thus his was basically a pattern of testimonial. A testimony must be distinguished from preaching but in the Salvation Army it constituted a large part of the verbal appeal for spiritual decision. Testimonies are given during "wars" on streets or in its halls. They are neither confessions nor reports on accomplishment, but presentations of religious experiences. Yamamuro described these as "not talking about oneself but portraying God's work in him, witnessing to God's gracious and powerful deed."<sup>54</sup> Yamamuro had this pattern of testimonial of the Salvation Army as an integral part of his preaching.

It is important to remember, however, that Yamamuro's preaching was not mere testimony and witnessing. The prophetic element in his ministry was clear and definite in his preaching. His basic posture was to grasp the listeners where they are, to insert into their souls the message of the Gospel in the most understandable words, to direct them to see themselves in the new light of values in Jesus Christ and to act out the new life in their society. The self-comprehension he urged in his preaching was not on an isolated individual basis but within the social context of each person.

Yamamuro's preaching finds its polished model in his

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<sup>54</sup>Takamichi, op. cit., p. 148.

famous Heimin no Fukuin (The Gospel of the Common People). This was published as a book in 1899, when he was twenty-seven, and went through four hundred and eighty editions, a historical monument in itself. As Ebizawa explains, "Its language and style were so acceptable to the people and so unique that it was said to have revolutionized the literature of the day."<sup>55</sup>

A brief analysis of Heimin no Fukuin should provide light upon Yamamuro's effectiveness as a preacher. The book consists of five chapters:

- Chapter 1 The Heavenly Father
- " 2 Man's Sin and Trespasses
- " 3 Salvation in Christ
- " 4 The Life of Faith
- " 5 The Way of Duty

Each chapter is divided into five sections with short and easy titles. Chapter five, for instance, is composed of sub-sections entitled:

- 1 You are the salt of the earth
- 2 Seek first the Kingdom of God
- 3 Salvation gives health
- 4 Love begins in the family
- 5 To die is also gain

The preface begins with a sentence, "I am a mere laborer. The only desire in my heart, since my first experience of salvation in Jesus Christ at age sixteen, when I was a worker in a printing shop, was to tell the story to the common people."<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>Norimichi Ebizawa, Japanese Witnesses for Christ (London: Lutterworth Press, 1957), p. 63

<sup>56</sup>Gumpei Yamamuro, Heimin no Fukuin (Tokyo: Kyuseigun Shuppan, 1975), preface.

Throughout the book he uses simple expressions with numerous illustrative stories out of Japanese proverbs, folktales, and contemporary personalities, as well as stories of persons and incidents abroad. The biblical narratives are used to clarify the naked realities of human life and the concluding analysis is presented by a frequent use of the Pauline epistles. Here we find a striking difference between Yamamuro and Uchimura. The main thread of Yamamuro's preaching effort is human stories. The biblical reference is made at each crucial point as a criterion for evaluating the human reality lifted up and portrayed. Yamamuro's commitment to the biblical truth is unquestionable but the method of presenting it to common people of limited means and education led him to the extensive use of rich illustrative stories in order to make the biblical message understandable. It is a form of story-telling preaching in which the meaning of a focal point or topic is presented first and followed by allegorical or parabolic stories as clarification of the topic dealt with. Here stories are taken both from the common human situations and out of the biblical narratives. The conclusion is inevitably an appeal for decision by presenting alternatives for living. The three points can be translated into (1) teaching about God the Father, (2) sin and salvation and (3) the life of holiness. The theological basis of Yamamuro's preaching is the cross. Here we find a solid common denominator between him and Kagawa. In the case of Yamamuro, the doctrinaire pillars of the Salvation Army, redemption and holiness, had an added dimension,

while Kagawa's theology of the cross was supported by a philosophical element of personalistic understanding of God.

Yamamuro was a soldier of the cross and his preaching was a battle cry to rally common people under the flag of the prophetic God, whose language was that of the poor and down-trodden and oppressed. He was the preacher, indeed, of the Church militant.

Preaching for the masses. Yamamuro was never confined to any institutions, not even to his own Salvation Army. From the experiences of his younger days, when he was unable to sense a spiritual vibration in the institutional church, he found himself increasingly free to take the Gospel to the mass of society everywhere. For him the Salvation Army provided a functional wheel for that freedom. Taking the Gospel to the mass, the people of ordinary paths of life, of occupations, status and means, had two channels--preaching, and social service and reform. He himself was of a common background and stood on that ground throughout his life.

He was not a born preacher. It was his simple and passionate yearning to lead a good life that led him to the Christian faith. It was this passion and simplicity which styled his preaching. Yamamuro considered the pulpit, or more accurately for him the rostrum, a privilege. As his daughter, Tamiko, describes her father as a preacher, he was at his best speaking to unskilled laborers, artisans, small merchants and generally down-to-earth people of the Honjo-

Fukagawa area of Tokyo, known as a slum to semi-industrial sectors. "On such occasions and settings, he appeared almost a master preacher unmatched. You could hear a pin drop and at times the audience burst out in laughter and at other times cried."<sup>57</sup> For him such an experience was a great joy as well as a privilege. Said he, concerning preaching:

There may be a variety of noble tasks for service in this world, but none is greater than to stand on a platform for Christ. I consider it the most sacred of works available to us. It is also an eternal task and battle necessary for the building of heaven on this earth.<sup>58</sup>

Zenda Watanabe, who himself was one of the most able preachers, as well as a biblical scholar, makes a fascinating comment on Yamamuro's effectiveness as a preacher. Watanabe says that Ebina's preaching had the taste of salt-water fish while Yamamuro's was that of fresh-water. Yamamuro's sermons had a delicate taste according to Watanabe's allegorical analysis.<sup>59</sup> Another comparison is made by Watanabe bringing into the scene Juji Nakata, a dynamic leader of the Japan Holiness Church, organized in 1917. The comparison presents a helpful insight into both Nakata and Yamamuro as preachers:

There was no preacher who excelled Mr. Nakata in calling for repentance. Certainly there were theological, ideological, literary and social-message

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<sup>57</sup>Tamiko Yamamuro, "Yamamuro Gumpei Hyoden" (A Biographical Sketch of Gumpei Yamamuro), in Gumpei Yamamuro, Kirisutosha no Asahiruban (Christian's Morning, Noon, and Evening) (Tokyo: Kyobunkwan, 1970), p. 117.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 117

<sup>59</sup>Zenda Watanabe, Watanabe Zenda Zenshu (Complete Works of Zenda Watanabe) (Tokyo: Kirisuto Shimbun, 1966), p. 62.

preachers but in bringing people to the point of conversion Nakata was superb. But there was one troublesome factor. Inevitably, Mr. Nakata caused a negative and resistant reaction among some listeners. There were various reasons for this. But Mr. Yamamuro's preaching was "from the bottom", so to speak, while Nakata preached "from the top." Yamamuro never talked cynically or abused anyone, while Nakata often picked on well-known figures in society and in churches.... For me there was one preacher; that was Gumpei Yamamuro.<sup>60</sup>

Yamamuro preached with his total personality, committing himself to Christ, devoting his whole being to the salvation of common people. For him the mass was not an impersonal entity but a composition of God's created beings needing God's word to find the completeness of their humanity."

Toyohiko Kagawa (1888-1960)

Some nineteen years after his death, Toyohiko Kagawa should stand for an objective historical evaluation within the century of the Japanese Protestant movement. A variety of evaluation comments have been made in the past and a number of books have been written about Kagawa, both before and after his death in 1960. The focus of this study is placed upon him as a preacher. This writer's father made a comment on his death bed that whatever else Kagawa did in seventy-two years of life, Kagawa was most of all a great preacher. This somewhat subjective observation should be taken for an objective analysis. The difficulty in such an analysis is the surprising lack of written records, in published form, of his sermons. This is

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

indicative of his evangelistic fashion, which transcended a classificational difference among communicational modes. For Kagawa any occasion for public expression of thought was preaching. Thus we may turn to a collection of lectures and, as in the case of Yamamuro's Heimin no Fukuin, his writings, as materials for analytical study.

Arising from a well-to-do middle-class family immersed in the fast-moving business world of the late nineteenth century Japan, Kagawa had dark and lonely years as a youth. From his boyhood he possessed a keen sensitivity and intelligence in confronting and grasping the deepest issues and problems of life. Born to the concubine-wife of his businessman father, he struggled from early life against an inexpressibly low moral atmosphere, a cruelly loveless environment, and severe loneliness. It was his encounter with two American missionaries, H. W. Myers and C. A. Logan, which introduced him to the Bible and to the new dimension of value in the Christian fellowship based upon the Bible. The rest of his life story is well known. While a student at Kobe Theological School, his health degenerated to a nearly fatal point. With John Wesley's diary as inspiration, he moved into the slum of notorious Shinkawa in Kobe to live there for fourteen years. This period is the key in comprehending Kagawa in his total personhood.

The life in Kagawa's Shinkawa is recorded with fascinating detail by his colleague Masaru Takeuchi.<sup>1</sup> Kagawa's two

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<sup>61</sup>Masaru Takeuchi, Kagawa Toyohiko to Sono Boranchia



purposes in living in Shinkawa were evangelism and relief. Relief he did not know or have any experience in rendering. The evangelism he knew was in terms of preaching. As soon as he found a vacant room close to his own, he started a preaching meeting. Sunday morning meetings were held at five o'clock because many of the slum dwellers went to work even on Sundays. Evenings were spent preaching outdoors. This was a sort of pre-service campaign. Listeners received an appeal to join him in a "Christian" meeting in the meeting room. Young Kagawa often received assistance from seminary students from the near-by Kwansei Gakuin Theological School. Fourteen years of the combination of outdoor and indoor preaching in Shinkawa moulded Kagawa's preaching style. The style did not change to his death, though the compositional elements of his sermons gradually shifted from a simple and straight biblical and evangelical emphasis to more comprehensive social commentary content in later years.

His message: poetry of the love of God. Kagawa's primary call in life was evangelical in nature, seeking to proclaim plainly, by personal example, the central teaching of Christianity, that God is love. Whether in social welfare and reform, labor and peasant organization, or cooperative and peace movements, the foundation for Kagawa's faith and its application to concrete issues was his own experience of the

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(Toyohiko Kagawa and his Volunteers) (Kobe: Takeuchi Publishing Committee, 1973).

overflowing love of God, interpreted and grasped as a great personality, the source of all intrinsic values. His theological position is difficult to pin-point because he did not write, nor did he speak systematically in theological terms. An insightful study of Kagawa's theology is presented by Charles H. Germany. In it Germany elaborates on his finding of a variety of streams, ranging from Calvin, Wesley, F. D. Maurice and the English Christian socialists to the philosophical tradition of Borden Parker Bowne, in Kagawa's theology. Basically Germany focuses on the "cross consciousness" and the role of redemptive love as pillars in Kagawa's theological presupposition.<sup>62</sup> "True religious life comes alive with a sharpened consciousness of God. Jesus Christ possessed this consciousness in a growing sense until, finally, his was a perfect consciousness of God and of his own messiahship."<sup>63</sup>

Together with the emphasis upon the God-consciousness of man, which is the highest form of attainment in Jesus, Kagawa's faith finds its core in the incarnating redemptive love of God manifested in the event of the cross. Germany summarizes it and states:

As with the consciousness of God, so with man's experience of redemptive love, the first and efficient knowledge comes through redemption, but grows through man's

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<sup>62</sup>Germany, op. cit., p. 37.

<sup>63</sup>Toyohiko Kagawa, The Religion of Jesus (Philadelphia: Winston, 1931), pp. 82-3.

participation in the work of redemptive love. That is, the knowledge and experience of redemptive love grows as man moves into society to live, himself, the life of redemptive love.<sup>64</sup>

It is to the end of arousing the God-consciousness and letting every person be an instrument of God's redemptive love in this world that Kagawa committed himself to preaching. From the slum of Shinkawa to labor union halls to public lecture halls to university class rooms, not only in Japan but all over the world, he carried the message of redemptive love. But most of all, particularly in the last twenty years of his life, his voice was heard in churches, large and small. In terms of the institutional church, he, too, like Yamamuro, was a fringe person. He never held any official position either in the Presbyterian Church before the merger or in the United Church of Christ in Japan, of which he was a member as the pastor of Matsuzawa Church. Though the majority of the church people knew what Kagawa's message would be, when he spoke people gladly flocked to hear him.

What was Kagawa's attraction and the cause of his effectiveness as a preacher? How was it different from the passionate evangelicalism of Yamamuro? Here again, Zenda Watanabe's comment is helpful. "The greatest cause for thanksgiving in my life," says Watanabe, "is my association with Mr. Toyohiko Kagawa. I call him specifically a 'revered' friend. That is because I find in him a fascinating integration of the evange-

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<sup>64</sup>Germany, op. cit., p. 37.

lical and social tasks of the church based upon the unshakable foundation of the biblical message."<sup>65</sup> As a biblical scholar, Watanabe could not help but pay respect to his friend for the magnificent mutuality of the Bible and its message in social realities as incarnated in the life of Kagawa.

His whole personality was in itself the preaching of the Bible. Here he stands with Yamamuro, sixteen years his senior in age. The life these men were living permeated their beings and the mere visibility of their appearance was inspiring and communicative to many people. But what about the message itself? Kagawa had a tone of optimistic trust in human goodness. He argued for the ultimate perfection of the incarnational process of the redemptive love in a person. Germany is not overstating the matter when he says, "Put sharply, but certainly no more sharply than Kagawa himself put it, a man redeemed through the love of Christ thereupon carries into his own life-activities a character of redeeming love which challenges the very uniqueness of the redemptive work of Christ himself."<sup>66</sup>

If the Kagawan theology is to be categorized, with the understanding of his emphasis upon the God-consciousness and the incarnating redemptive love, we may say that it is the theology of the absolute ethic of love. As his book title

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<sup>65</sup>Shiro Kuroda, Ningen Kagawa Toyohiko (Toyohiko Kagawa as a Man). (Tokyo: Kirisuto Shimbun, 1970), p. 1.

<sup>66</sup>Germany, op. cit., pp. 38-9.

indicates, the essence of his faith is in love as the law of life.<sup>67</sup> And that was his fundamental message in preaching.

Preaching: freshness of spoken words. Kagawa was more than an apostle of social Christianity. He was a prophetic voice of personal salvation as well as social reconstruction in Japan, attempting to direct the voice to all corners of the society. Within his multi-faceted life as a Christian evangelist for the total society, his impact and influence on the non-Christian segment of that society must be given a significant place in the historical study of Japanese Protestantism. Drummond concludes his treatment of Kagawa with these words.

Perhaps the most historically significant aspect of Kagawa's career was the fact that as a Christian he informed the moral conscience of a largely non-Christian nation probably more than any other of his countrymen in the twentieth century. The ethical awareness, the social ideals, and to a very appreciable extent the spiritual understanding, of the Japanese people in the present generation are, in my judgment, owed to Kagawa as a nation rarely owes its inner life to one man.<sup>68</sup>

Though Kagawa was effective in public lectures and speeches, like Yamamuro, he, too, was a preacher in all situations. He was an energetic preacher and speaker. During the Kingdom of God Campaign, to which he committed himself exclusively from 1930 to 1934, he often spoke six times a day. His

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<sup>67</sup>Toyohiko Kagawa, Love the Law of Life, (Chicago: Winston, 1929).

<sup>68</sup>Drummond, op. cit., p. 241.

close associate, Mr. Shiro Kuroda, recorded his daily activities during the Campaign. One record describes one of the six-speech-a-day campaigns in 1930 in the city of Kurashiki.<sup>69</sup> And his style was usually not of a commonly accepted pattern. In a large public auditorium in Tokyo in a lecture series one day, his opening sentence was, "The problem belongs to God and eternity."<sup>70</sup> This sort of approach to communication caught his audience off guard but immediately had their attention. There was freshness in his style attractive enough so that the avoidance of a common pattern for public speaking did not alienate the audience. Another example is cited by Kuroda. At an evening outdoor public Christmas rally, attended mostly by non-Christians, he stood and spoke with short sentences in which the first line was, "Is there one person among nine million citizens of Tokyo looking at that bright moon?" as he pointed to the moon above.<sup>71</sup>

For Kagawa the unorthodox style of speaking was not an attention-getting gimmick. He was basically a poet with a deep commitment to the world of science and seeing no boundary division between religion and science, theory and practice, rational and emotional elements of a person. His grasp of a person, of society, of the world, of the universe was always

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<sup>69</sup>Kuroda, op. cit., p. 95.

<sup>70</sup>Seiichi Honda and others, "Zadan: Taisho-Showa no Mei-Sekkyoja" (Roundtable Discussion: Great Preachers of the Taisho-Showa Period), Bokkai to Sekkyo (Ministry and Preaching), II (October 1963) 15.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

holistic and thus according to the situation and people involved he was skillfully flexible in his style, which appeared unorthodox to many people.

Kagawa's preaching in his younger days was Bible-centered. During the Taisho period, 1912-25, his preaching was almost strictly based upon exposition of the scripture selections, such as the Pauline letters, the life and teaching of Jesus, inner life described in the Old and New Testaments. It was done in understandable and easy language. Gradually his interest in science, which went almost beyond the amateur level, made its way into his preaching and public lectures. It was partly in response to the increasing rationalism in Japan that Kagawa was eager to integrate scientific stories, data and methodology into his discourse. The end result was, in actuality, a decrease in his effectiveness, comparatively speaking, not only as a Christian evangelist but as a public speaker. The focus of his message did not have, on many occasions, a consistent forcefulness. When he was visibly effective, usually the message was intensely biblical.

Though there was this tendency in Kagawa to spread the content wide in approaching a large audience or a small church congregation, he was always able to bring his sermon or lecture to an intensive and heightened conclusion. At this point, we can see a similarity to Yamamuro. In actual sermon construction, Yamamuro excelled. Kagawa's sermons, particularly in his later years, were often disjointed and the only clear message might be the simple biblical one of repentance and

commitment to the "cohesive force (authority) maintaining a united society against threats from within and without"<sup>72</sup>-- the ethic of the love of God, with which he usually concluded his preaching.

Homiletically speaking, then, Kagawa's preaching had flaws. His delivery style, developed during his Shinkawa slum days by outdoor preaching, was dynamic but not always communicative. His high-pitched voice swerved from high tones to low at times. Due to poor dental health, caused by blows he received from drunkards in the slum, and to his Kwansai dialect, his sermons and speeches tended to sound somewhat slurred and were not always easy to understand. The fact that he was one of the most penetrating and influential preachers of twentieth-century Japan, both in and out of the church, was due to what he was, as a person incarnating the Word of God in his total commitment to what he believed to be the nature of God.

Bold attempt to bridge science and religion. As briefly observed, Kagawa's preaching was not of an orthodox style. His message was often in poetical expressions, a dynamic mixture of a passionate affirmation of the fundamental commitment to salvation by the blood of Jesus on the Cross on one hand, and on the other, a firm confirmation of human personality as the reflection of the God of the Personality

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<sup>72</sup>Germany, op. cit., p. 40.



of Love, with rich potential given to each person as a gift of God.

His insatiable interest in science was a part of his religious faith. The world of science was to Kagawa an integral part of the fascinating creation of God. And yet, he was not able to be completely objective and analytical as a scientist. In observing nature, for instance, he was quick to detect God's purpose and providence in it but could not detach it from his value orientation in order to see it empirically. He deeply loved nature, thus he was a poet singing about nature, more than a natural scientist.

Within this limitation, however, he attempted to present the biblical message and science together in order to proclaim the God of Jesus Christ in the totality of the universe. As we have seen, he was not always successful in that attempt to uplift God as a cosmic being to Japanese listeners. What made him a superb communicator was his religious ideology of the practice and poetry of the love of God to support that practice. There was a religious conviction in his faith but a lack of convincing proof and evidence of science, which he sought with passion. But his poetic expressions in preaching of the love which becomes a reality in the bloodstream of human reality had a tone of prophecy. There was a sense of flowing freedom in him. He was a strong personality not easily tied down to a single idea or classified into an established group. This was evident in the fact that he was never fully accepted by the established institutional church in Japan. But this

was the reason for his effectiveness in reaching more Japanese than any other preacher in the history of Japanese Protestantism to this day.

Mikio Sumiya's words of conclusion in his book are well put in describing Kagawa as a preacher. Sumiya says, "When we evaluate a person, we must consider something more than that person's thought. A person with his own uniqueness of personality suffers, agonizes, fights and carries his own cross. That person must be evaluated on that personality."<sup>73</sup> Kagawa preached with his total personality, pouring himself into his attempt to reflect the creative God of his faith.

#### Zenda Watanabe (1885-1978)

The Confucian cultural soil of Japan had always given an element of reverence and prestige to people of scholarship. This mentality has penetrated into the life of the church. There is an interesting tendency observable in Japanese Christianity that biblical scholars and theologians have been and are treated with exceptional respect. Scholars are often sought after as speakers and preachers in Japanese churches. Many theological educators, partly due to mere economic necessity, serve as pastors of churches. These churches are often looked upon with envy by members of other churches as though professors were superior pastors.

And yet scholars are not necessarily effective preachers. As a matter of fact, the biblical scholars and

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<sup>73</sup>Mikio Sumiya, Kagawa Toyohiko (Tokyo: Nihon Kirisuto Kyodan Shuppanbu, 1966), p. 198.

theologians in Japanese Protestantism have often been less than ordinary as preachers. Zenda Watanabe is treated as a part of this study as an exceptional person, whose scholarship found a direct channel to the pulpit and made him an outstanding communicator for Japanese churches.

Watanabe was born in 1885 on the Izu Peninsula in Shizuoka Prefecture. His initiation into the Christian faith was through the work of the Oriental Missionary Society, established in 1901 as a Holiness Church, in which Juji Nakata was the charismatic leader. Previously Watanabe had had an experience of attending Ebina's church but there was no specific spiritual change in him though the active evangelistic air of Fukuin Dendokan left him with a strange inner tension. He was baptized by a Disciple missionary and received his education at Meiji Gakuin Theological Seminary. It was his Holiness initiation into the biblical faith which stimulated his study of the Bible, but the highly academic atmosphere of Meiji Gakuin as a Presbyterian institution was the challenge to his scholarly discipline. His study at Pacific School of Religion and the University of California provided a solid background for his Old Testament study and he returned to Japan to commence his teaching career at Doshisha University, Tokyo Women's College, Aoyama Gakuin University and Japan Christian Seminary for Women.

It was in post-war Japan that he found himself as a man of the pulpit, as one of the pastors at Ginza Church where he served until his retirement in 1971. Though the

major portion of his life was spent as a teacher of Old Testament theology and literature, including publication of many books, which are now contained in the Watanabe Zenda Zenshu (Complete Works of Zenda Watanabe), his preaching role was just as effective. Kato considers him "a large scale preacher who possesses a magnificent combination of theological and biblical foundation, a concrete thought pattern intimate to common people, freedom unrestricted by any established pattern and a ringing voice."<sup>74</sup> Unlike Uchimura, Watanabe was insistent on considering the church as the arena in which the Bible was to be studied and preached. Michalson, approaching Watanabe in a theological analysis, states, "Zenda Watanabe, with no thought of polemics, has developed the position that there is no faithful study of the Bible, that is no study of the Bible as the word of God, that does not occur within the framework of the church."<sup>75</sup> Watanabe was one of very few men who was able to bring his competent biblical scholarship into a living reality in the life of the church through preaching.

His message: The whole Bible as a witness. Watanabe's biblical scholarship was of an unquestionable quality. Certainly it is not without its counter-concepts in theological and theoretical presuppositions. His emphasis upon the

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<sup>74</sup>Tsuneaki Kato, "Watanabe Zenda", Kirisutokyo Nenkan (Christian Yearbook) (1976), XIV, 101.

<sup>75</sup>Michalson, op. cit., p. 35.

canonization process of the Bible in the fourth century and the authority of the scripture as a whole in sole relationship to the Church has been debated. Watanabe's insistence that the Bible, as canonized, must be dealt with as a whole, that "interpretation of the Bible as the word of God involves participation in the faith of the historical church that created the Bible as canon",<sup>76</sup> and that the allegorical, the dogmatic and the historical hermeneutical methods are all inadequate and must be brought into close and integral parts of the life of the church in order for the Bible to be the true source of strength and truth for believers, has aroused both enthusiastic supporters and opponents.

What Watanabe developed as the basis for his biblical scholarship had four parts, as Michalson describes.<sup>77</sup> First, there is the primacy of the theological interpretation of the Bible over historical criticism. For Christians, the Bible is the rule of faith and life. Certain hermeneutical methods are utilized in interpreting the Bible but basically it is through faith in the community of believers that a person is able to comprehend the message of the Bible. First of all, for Watanabe, the Bible is not a reference but a criterion for faith and life. It is neither merely tradition nor literature.

Second, Watanabe does not argue that canonicity alone

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<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., pp. 39-45.

is the basis for the Bible's authority. The Church canonized the Bible because it recognized the biblical authority upon itself. The Bible "outranks" the church. Watanabe, then, places heavy emphasis upon the Bible's self-assertive power and authority over the Church and thus over all believers.

Third, it is argued that any single book of the Bible cannot be singled out to claim the scriptural truth. The Bible is a gestalt, so to speak, a structure of books, which depends for its impact in a measure upon the appropriation of the Bible as a whole. And finally, the biblical interpretations are based upon the communal effort to search out existential situations in which each book of the Bible came into existence and was then placed in the Bible in the canonization process. Nothing is in the Bible, as the canon of the Church, fortuitously. Before an interpreter acts precipitously, he should ask himself what the Church must have had in mind in including such materials.

Michalson's rather substantial treatment of Watanabe is indicative of Watanabe's eminence not only as a biblical scholar but also as a theologian. He was a loner but his comprehensive view of, not only biblical interpretation but the Bible, Church and society, was unusually stimulating and jolted the stagnant style of the Bible study in Japan of his day.

Watanabe's message, then, was based upon his conviction that the Bible is the word of God, to be comprehended in relationship to the community of believers, the Church.

The Bible is recognized as a partly human product but an authentic witness to God who works in history. This authenticity makes the Bible, though humanly produced, the word of God, or at least the source of the word of God to be expounded. Watanabe's understanding of the Bible is embedded in the Holiness background of his youthful days, his associations with the Salvation Army, his encounters with the Plymouth Brethren. His theological study at Meiji Gakuin, as well as in the United States and Germany, stimulated and nurtured his persistent inquiry into the scientific study of the Bible and helped to integrate his biblical knowledge with the pietistic faith he had inherited from the past.

Preaching: Incarnated scholarship in vivid language.

As we have noted, Watanabe gained a regular pulpit only in the latter part of his life. As one of the pastors for Ginza Church in the post-war years, he preached the third Sunday of every month. This preaching ministry continued for twenty-four years and it was there at Ginza Church that his unique quality as a preacher became a recognized fact. It was through his preaching that his competence in biblical scholarship became incarnated in the actual lives of church members. The best example of his preaching is found in the collection of sermons from the first half of the 1950s, compiled in the book entitled Gizensha o Dasu Tokoro (The Place that Produces Hypocrites), published in 1958. The title sermon portrays the Church as having the inevitable nature of producing hypocrites

and that the more hypocrites a church has the more active it becomes. This puzzling message is a relatively short sermon for Watanabe, who often preached for an hour. It is composed, in its written form, of five sub-sections: (1) The society which produces hypocrites, (2) the Christianization of society, (3) the church which produces hypocrites, (4) the teaching of the New Testament concerning conduct in society, and (5) the church inevitably produces hypocrites.<sup>78</sup>

In this sermon, Watanabe discusses the often-heard criticism in Japanese society that the Christian Church is the place of hypocrites. Such a criticism, in the first few years of the post-war period, was often made with illustrations of the ill-behaved American soldiers in the occupation forces. The critic usually presented America as a Christian nation and thus its citizens as being well oriented in Christian ethical standards. Watanabe's exposition goes through the behavior of Japanese soldiers in southern Asia during the war and gradually elaborates on why a person acts hypocritically and what causes that person so to act. The discussion is developed through semantics in attempting to understand the meaning of goodness. The Japanese term "gizen", meaning hypocrisy, literally means to "falsify goodness." References are made to the Letter from James and the Sermon on the Mount to focus on the New Testament picture of goodness. Watanabe brings his sermon to the conclusion that hypocrisy

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<sup>78</sup>Watanabe, op. cit., pp. 519-28.



"exists only by virtue of a social standard of values in the light of which a man is compelled to appear better than he is."<sup>79</sup> In the life of the church there is an unavoidable discrepancy between what the society dictates and what Jesus commands. Bridging the two and setting up one's own priority for life is not an instantaneous process. For goodness to permeate in the spirit of Jesus requires community discipline and to be recognized beyond a visible virtue of an individual to its source requires a spiritual awareness that anything that is not based on faith is sin. (Romans 14:23) It is inevitable, therefore, that as long as the life of the Christian community is a process of making a spiritual pilgrimage, hypocrisy is present. The key is to be aware of its presence so that we can ask God to nurture and strengthen our life of faith together. This is the gist of the sermon.

It is obvious that he was responding to the uneasiness among his church people at hearing voices of criticism from "secular" sectors of society. It was a controversial issue which many people in Ginza Church were hesitant to bring out into the open. Watanabe's sensitivity to the situation resulted in a form of apologetic preaching but provided insights as to the nature of the church as a community. This sensitivity to the hidden agenda of people made Watanabe's sermons forceful and provocative.

Not only did Watanabe turn his academic competence

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<sup>79</sup>Michalson, op. cit., p. 144.

into an effective tool in dealing with concrete spiritual and social issues and realities, but he was able to do so with vivid language. A helpful clue to Watanabe's skillful mastery of language, understandable to the sophisticated as well as the common, ordinary people of the streets coming into the churches, is found in his autobiographical reflections. Here we find Watanabe in his upper teens, coming to Tokyo from his country town. What intrigued him more than anything else was the world of art, of theatres of variety, as well as sumo, the traditional Japanese wrestling. Whether it was kabuki, a lively drama form which arose from the merchant culture of the Tokugawa period, or rakugo, a common people's entertainment, a polished story-telling art, Watanabe soaked himself in it as long as his economic means permitted. His description of the world of performing arts, whether a quality theatrical production or down-to-earth people's entertainment, is far from an amateur quality.

His intense interest in the variety of arts can be considered a source of colorful illustrations in sermons as well as the vivid language he used in describing them and biblical stories. Here we should consider vivid language as non-abstract, descriptive, easy-to-understand everyday expressions. That Watanabe had to a high degree and he used it to present vital issues of life and faith, not always simply for exposition. An important concept of the Bible is lifted in the context of a concrete life situation and illustrated and explained by popular proverbs, folktales,

dramas or contemporary news. The use of an ordinary daily expression and terminology in an unusual connection to a Christian concept and terminology gives Watanabe's sermons a rhythm. A thought-provoking idea is presented but immediately followed by an enjoyable illustration as a "breather", which then serves as a link to further elaboration of the idea.

His sermon titles are occasionally abstract and "heavy" sounding, such as "Overcoming Crisis as a Christian", "Misunderstanding Christianity", "Evangelical Faith and Creative Life", "Need of the Age and the Response of the Church", and "The Logic of Grace."<sup>80</sup> Each sermon, however, focuses on one idea of the Christian faith and scriptural teaching, and is illustrated by numerous stories, usually secular in nature. This homiletical technique made Watanabe an effective communicator in a mixed congregation at Ginza Church, one composed of intellectually oriented middle-class, as well as blue-collar, workers, students as well as sophisticated professionals.

Training quality of practical insights. Watanabe's scholarship and pastoral competence always implied detailed practicality. His writing was not strictly concentrated on biblical scholarship in Old Testament studies, but included a homiletically helpful Seishoteki Sekkyo towa? (What is Biblical Preaching?), published in 1968. It is a semi-autobiographical analysis of preaching in which he describes his

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<sup>80</sup>Watanabe, op. cit., V, 515-710.

own agony in bringing the biblical message to the bloodstream of people in society and his struggle to make preaching the focus of his Christian ministry.

For Watanabe, Christian preaching equals biblical preaching. Here he stands in the historical tradition of Japanese Protestants, whether we take Uemura, Yamamuro, Nakata, or Tsuneteru Miyagawa as prototype.<sup>81</sup> Central in biblical preaching, argues Watanabe, is the task of bringing the Bible into direct confrontation with two polarities in life--universal evil on the one end and the evil spirit binding an individual on the other. Biblical preaching is to challenge both, and the persons hanging between the two. Watanabe defines biblical preaching, "The core is Jesus Christ and the event of his crucifixion, thus the Gospel of the Cross as described in I Corinthians 2:2."<sup>82</sup> That Gospel, for Watanabe, must be a challenging force not only for the salvation of the soul of a person, but against the force of evil dominating the world in which that person is given life. Here Watanabe is not arguing for the traditional Social Gospel, though his encounter with Walter Rauschenbush in his student days was a jolting experience for him. His point is that the biblical message must be spoken with authority to a person and to the context in which that person has his/her

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<sup>81</sup>Tsuneteru Miyagawa was a contemporary of Uemura, a member of the Kumamoto Band, who together with Hiromichi Kozaki led the Japan Congregational Church as outstanding preacher and evangelist in the latter part of the nineteenth to the first of the twentieth century.

<sup>82</sup>Zenda Watanabe, Seishoteki Sekkyo towa? (What is

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The ministry of the gospel as found in Watanabe is in preaching directed to the whole universe but focused on the concrete existence of listeners and their lives. It requires an all-out effort to comprehend both individual persons and society as concrete entities as accurately as possible and the mastery of language and images meaningful to those persons. The basic raw material, without question, is the Bible. But the means to cultivate that raw material is none other than a living creature in a specific cultural context.

His preaching, as well as his teaching, often included specific elaboration on the practicality of ideas he was dealing with. A short article, "The Leisure Time of a Pastor", stresses that a pastor must consider his time as that of a watchman or guard on duty. A guard has plenty of time and he is able to do much thinking. But the time he has is that of tension. The guard must be able to answer the persistent question, "Watchman, tell us of the night?" without hesitation. He suggests that a pastor must guard his time and utilize it in sharpening his message for preaching.

His preaching was "tasty" according to his listeners. That, to them, meant that the message of a sermon remained with them, not as sound, but as a "chewy" content relevant to their lives. The significance of Zenda Watanabe was in his ability to digest the Bible and to verbalize it in lively forms to a variety of people in the life of the church.

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Biblical preaching?) Tokyo: Nihon Kirisuto Kyodan Shuppan-kyoku, 1969), p. 276.

Masahisa Suzuki (1912-1969)

There was a specific need for imaginative leadership in the post-war Christianity of Japan. The need was for a quality of leadership in which were integrated a shepherding ability to sustain and care for people's needs, a prophetic voice to speak the word of God in judgment, comfort and love, and functional efficiency in pooling together a variety of administrative elements involved in an ecclesiastical organization, however small. For the United Church of Christ in Japan, commonly called the Kyodan, the leadership was taken for eight years after the war by an able pastor and efficient administrator, Michio Kozaki of Reinanzaka Church in Tokyo. This was the period of both physical and spiritual healing for all Japanese. The churches were in a state of liberated rejoicing and there were experiences of unusual increase in church attendance. But the pain of the war left a deep scar in all Japanese. The gentle personality of Kozaki was helpful in bringing the Kyodan into a more stable and re-structured state of being. There were some inevitable withdrawals of certain denominations from the Kyodan immediately following the end of the war, but as a whole the Kyodan was able to pull itself together to face the new days in post-war Japan.

After the long period of Kozaki's leadership, the following twelve years saw three classical characters carrying the leadership role as moderator of the Kyodan. Ken Muto, Keikichi Shirai and Isamu Ohmura were all far from "colorful" personalities but were, rather, quiet men having a gentle

administrative touch for the often inefficiently operated Kyodan organization. But by the mid 1960s, the Kyodan was ready to move forward with some vision, rather than to continually review the past, and to analyze possible missiological strategies. Such was the time when Masahisa Suzuki was elected the moderator of the Kyodan. Though he was to serve in that capacity for less than three years, until his untimely death by cancer in 1969, Suzuki exerted an exciting, though often controversial, image with a vision for the church of tomorrow in Japan.

Suzuki was the first "senchuha" pastor to assume the leadership of the Kyodan. Senchuha literally means "the faction of the war years." It designates a generation of adults who went through their formative years during the war. Suzuki was a young pastor during the war and went through the agony of being caught between the national interest expressed in the war and his commitment to his faith. All the moderators before him reflected the pre-war Japanese education and more or less compromised their religious stance during the pressure-ridden war years.

The excitement he caused was not because he held the church leadership position as the moderator of the Kyodan. Suzuki was the kind of person who indicated that difficult combination of abilities described above, though his administrative ability was of exceptional excellence. He was first of all a pastor and a preacher. There was something refreshing about his personality and his ministerial style.

The "angry young man" turns constructionist.<sup>83</sup>

Masahisa Suzuki was born to a family in Shizuoka prefecture in which the Shinto priesthood was the profession for generations to the time of his grandfather. It was his father, who was in the cavalry of the Japanese army, who first became a Christian, though he did not stay long in the Church, disappointed by the over-emphasis of his minister upon monetary prudence and a greater giving to the church. It was with his mother that Suzuki, as a boy, started to attend a church school in Tokyo. There must have been in him some of his father's rebellion against the puritanical emphasis upon moral conduct. Suzuki was often to be rebellious against a taken-for-granted mainstream in anything, including the affairs of the life of the Church, in which he was to be a leader. It was his mother, who had to entertain the minister on his pastoral calls, who supplied the spiritual nurture in the Suzuki family. This was the mother whom Suzuki left behind as he departed from his earthly mission at the age of 58, praising her consistent faithfulness and loyalty to the Church from the day of her baptism.

Young Suzuki was under his father's strong influence and thus unable to agree with his mother's stubborn loyalty to her church. This influence was strong, not only in the area of the Church, but in his philosophy of life in general.

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<sup>83</sup>Drummond, op. cit., p. 291.



His father, though disabled early because of illness, was a military man and his educational philosophy was Spartan.

"Do not be defeated by anything" was the philosophy deeply implanted in Masahisa. This was, of course, a military mentality transplanted into the father's child-rearing method. Suzuki later recalled that this spirit of forbearance taught by his father was in due course related to his reading of Paul's Letter to the Romans (8:37) in understanding what is the real victory in life and what a person was required to forbear.<sup>84</sup>

After a long absence, Suzuki returned to the church when his sister nearly forced him to go. He was sixteen. It was his friendship with the son of the minister which led to a lessening of his resistance against Christianity. And his attachment and commitment to the church led to his entrance into Aoyama Gakuin Theological Seminary, at age eighteen. It is an interesting historical anecdote that the head of the Theological Seminary at this time was Isamu Ohmura, whom Suzuki was to succeed as the moderator in 1966. And Suzuki was ordained in the Japan Methodist Church upon his completion of theological education. His ministry was confined to Tokyo, where he served three Methodist churches and after the union two churches of the Kyodan--Hongo Chuo and Nishikatamachi. It was during his pastoral ministry at Nishikatamachi that he was elected moderator of the Kyodan and died while in that office. It was also at Nishikatamachi that his preaching

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<sup>84</sup>Masahisa Suzuki, Ohdo (The Way of the King) (Tokyo: Nihon Kirisuto Kyodan Shuppankyoku, 1970), p. 24.

style was consummated.

Faith and message. There was a certain charisma in Masahisa Suzuki. One might say it was his strong personality but the charisma was more than purely a personality factor. His colleague in the Kyodan work, Mr. Eiichi Amemiya, termed that charismatic quality "gallant" and "heroic" but it was something more than that.<sup>85</sup> It was an unswerving faith he had in God, along with an optimistic trust in human goodness. This can be seen as an interesting element as we consider his strong leaning towards the Barthian theological inclination. In any case, there was in Suzuki a feeling of strong character supported by faith and this feeling conveyed to his people a sense of authority, which some observers called "charismatic." Amemiya humorously recalls that the theological students who attended Suzuki's church slowly acquired Suzuki's way of talking and even laughed like him.<sup>86</sup>

The faith of Masahisa Suzuki was not neatly packaged. Coming from the complex religious situation at home, constantly resisting the elements of the niceties of the church, rebelling against the authoritarian dynamics within the Japan Methodist Church, suffering the pain of the tragedy of the war, uplifting a voice of criticism, even with some moderation, against the lukewarmness of the Church as a prophetic existence,

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<sup>85</sup>Eiichi Amemiya, Nihon no Kokuhaku Kyokai no Keisei (The Formation of the Confessional Church in Japan) (Tokyo: Shinko, 1975), p. 213.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., p. 216.

Suzuki molded and re-molded his faith, at least his understanding of the God of his faith.

What seems crucial in the maturation of his faith is Suzuki's year of study in Germany in 1961 under the scholarship program of the Evangelische Kirche der Union. The EKU in 1961 was facing a critical socio-political tension within Germany. It was on August 13 that year that the Berlin wall went up and escapees from East Berlin were gunned down by the East German Police. The EKU's ecclesiastical area covered both Berlins and thus the Church was placed in an agonizing state of existence. For Suzuki, the life in Berlin was a time of self-reflection as well as a time to sharpen his critical insight regarding his ministry in Japan.

Suzuki's theological and missiological understanding of God can best be summarized in the issuance, on Easter Sunday of 1967, by the Kyodan, of the Confession of Responsibility of the United Church of Christ in Japan During World War II, under his initiative and leadership. It is somewhat strange to accept a statement and a pronouncement as symbolic of a person's theology, but in this case the Confession can be taken almost as a personal confession of Suzuki himself. Though still controversial after twelve years, the Confession of Responsibility will surely maintain a significant place in the history of the Kyodan. The other historical monument in the Kyodan is the 1956 adoption of the Confession of Faith.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>87</sup>Iglehart, *op. cit.*, p. 338.

These two confessions were to be understood as inseparable in Suzuki's argument. For Suzuki, a confession of faith is dialogical in nature, in contrast to the normative (*norma Normata*) nature of the Bible. As long as it is dialogical, there is a possibility for change and for reformulation of expressional styles.

For Suzuki, whose faith always called for a renewal and rejuvenation of the present in the light of the scriptural truth, the vagueness about the role the Church played in Japan in relation to World War II was a betrayal of the fundamental element in the Christian faith. For him the Confession had meaning more as directional guidance for coming days than as a penitential act for a past misdoing. He puts this understanding in scriptural terms by saying, "The Letter to the Hebrews says that all things are cleansed by blood. Not just words, but the words must be accompanied by concrete actions before the cleansing is completed. Not just actions. Actions lined by living blood."<sup>88</sup> The sinfulness is not a mere personal fact in Suzuki's theological grasp, but has a corporate element which must be taken into account before sinful acts are forgiven.

The message Suzuki preached with increasing intensity as he approached his death was not only the need for confrontational battle against the depth of sinfulness of persons and their society, but also the promised forgiveness and grace of

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<sup>88</sup>M. Suzuki, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

God who makes the future possible for all humankind. Thus the Confession of 1967 was a deeply religious pronouncement, though dealing with socio-political issues.

Preaching: Invitation to God's Kingdom. Kiyoshi Ii, a young secretary for the Kyodan under Suzuki's moderatorship, described his impression of the man as he counseled the members of Suzuki's church before and after the death:

The members of Nishikatamachi Church seemed deeply engrossed in and nurtured by Mr. Suzuki's preaching. They seemed to be not only guided gently but sternly disciplined, to the extent of consistency and completeness.... As we read his sermons, we see a clear example of a pastor feeding his people and his people nurturing their pastor.<sup>89</sup>

An analysis of Suzuki's sermons is possible through the collection published shortly after his death, and his meditational exposition on the Lord's Prayer. These sermons were taped and later transcribed by members of Nishikatamachi Church. Thus they convey to the reader a sense of reality as a sermon is preached. They date from the first Sunday in 1967 to Suzuki's death on July 14, 1969. There are other sermons recorded in the last section of his book, Kami no Kuni no Otozure (The News of the Kingdom).<sup>90</sup>

Suzuki's preaching methodology stands in the biblical

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<sup>89</sup>Masahisa Suzuki, Suzuki Masahisa Sekkyo-shu (Collection of Sermons by Masahisa Suzuki) (Tokyo: Nihon Kirisuto Kyodan Shuppankyoku, 1969), p. 1 (an editorial comment).

<sup>90</sup>Masahisa Suzuki, Kami no Kuni no Otozure (Tokyo: Shinkyō, 1969).

preaching tradition of Japanese Protestantism. It is basically a mixture of exegetical and expository preaching and never just one without the other. This, too, is a common style of preaching in Japan. And yet, in Suzuki, the two are intricately and skillfully integrated to an exceptional degree. What made Suzuki exceptional was the internalization of his biblical study so that the exegesis and exposition were not merely someone else's work. It was authenticity which gave him power in his sermons.

There seems to be no consistency in the exegesis always coming at the beginning and the exposition following. On some occasions one approach is more dominant, at other times the other. His sermons are structured with a pattern of interwoven scriptural messages, either exegetically defined or expositively expounded, often with a "polyphonic" emphasis leading to a conclusion. The "polyphonic" emphasis in Suzuki's preaching means a homiletical style in which the main line, or run, of thought is uplifted by a scriptural exegesis and immediately followed by a short and concrete description of the thought, either by an illustrative story or by an expository comment.

Suzuki's sermon of June 7, 1964, entitled "Invitation", can be taken as one of the best homiletical examples.<sup>91</sup> The text is taken from Luke 14:15-24, dealing with the parable of a big banquet, to which people off the streets are invited.

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<sup>91</sup>Ibid., pp. 173-183.

The focus is placed upon the excuses the invited guests made to the host in declining the invitation. Each guest said he/she was unable to accept the invitation because he/she "must" do this or that. The Japanese expression "nebaranai" is lifted up repeatedly in order to describe the human tendency of making a relative an absolute and escaping the priority of the time. An outline for this sermon may be indicative of his other sermons:

- (1) Introductory remarks  
Jesus' stories sometimes sound "unnatural."  
He used them to clarify certain things.
- (2) Exegetical insight  
A comparison made with the parable in  
Matthew 22:2.
- (3) Expository development  
What are invitations? What is the nature  
of God's invitation?  
What do we mean by an invitation in our  
daily life?  
The meaning of declining an invitation.
- (4) An illustration from an Anton P. Chekhov  
short story.
- (5) Exegetical insight  
The "must."
- (6) Expository development  
Those who relied on "must."  
Those who did not say "we must."  
Those who accepted the invitation.
- (7) God's banquet is wide open. Our top priority  
is to accept the invitation to it.
- (8) Conclusion

An interesting insight into Suzuki's understanding of the task of preaching is found in informal comments he made in an interview format for the October 1, 1963, issue of a

seasonal publication, Bokkai to Sekkyo (Ministry and Preaching), of the Tokyo Presbytery of the Kyodan.<sup>92</sup> Suzuki stresses that the most difficult part in preparing a sermon is deciding what not to say. On the other hand, a preacher must come to a point, even through a process of grappling in the dark, of feeling, "This I must speak, in spite of everything." For a methodological help in preparation, he discovered a flexible use of the church calendar so that the whole Bible is approached in his preaching. He insists:

First of all we must let the Word of God penetrate into the bottom of our souls. We must be brought under its light. And in such an experience of being exposed by the Word should be a pastor's greatest joy. True comfort, also, is found in such an experience. We read the Bible not for preaching but for our own needs and nurture. Only then is a preacher able to proclaim the Word.<sup>93</sup>

Upon this basic presupposition for preaching he built his ministry. For him preaching was a sort of battle into which the realities of the world are brought, to be seen, tested and judged in the light of the Word of God. To him it is not a simple act of proclamation but a painful process aimed at an experience of renewal and joy for discovery of self as well as of others. His affectionate illustration from Kanji Miyazawa's well-known prose, "Amenimo makezu.... Kazenimo makezu.... Samusa no natsuniwa oro oro aruki" (Not defeated by rain, nor by wind.... Walking uncertainly in

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<sup>92</sup>Masahisa Suzuki, "Masahisa Bokushi no Jiko Bunseki" (Self-Analysis of Pastor Masahisa) Bokkai to Sekkyo, II, October 1963).

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., p. 36.



a summer's chill)<sup>94</sup> points to his suggestion that a preacher should consider the task of "uncertain footing for a search", if necessary, rather than always trying to act "undefeated" in preaching. This writer found this comment interesting, knowing that Suzuki was sternly taught by his father during his boyhood not to be defeated by anything. His point here is that a sermon, when it is too neatly packaged with an easy answer, does not effectively convey the message of the Gospel. Preaching was, for him, a repetitious search and "digging" for the Word which sustains lives in concrete social realities by the human words a preacher feels compelled to speak reflecting a corporate commitment to the unshakable foundation of our existence, God.

Culture and language. Suzuki was a man of his time, coming from a military family, in which the father had a dominant status and a pervasive influence. His family reflected an intriguing aspect of the Japanese culture in the role his mother played. She became a Christian and a loyal church member in a quiet way while her husband consistently remained anti-church. Suzuki grew up caught in this complex family atmosphere.

Throughout his life Suzuki exerted a posture of resistance, of varying degrees, against things established and against authoritarian patterns. The classification of him

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<sup>94</sup>Miyazawa's reference here is to an unusually cold summer when crops were severely damaged.

as one of the "angry young men" is partly due to this posture. And here he stands in the significant tradition of Japanese Protestantism. From the samurai-like personality of Uemura, down to the recently elected moderator of the Kyodan, Mr. Toshio Ushiroku, many of the Protestant leaders in Japan possessed the quality of swimming against the stream of the cultural environment. This may be an inevitable quality in the Christian faith when it exists in an extreme minority situation. But in the case of Masahisa Suzuki he would not even take for granted the pattern of vertical leadership within the Church structure. The Christian faith, too, and its theological dynamics were not to be taken without serious questioning. And Suzuki was not only an able preacher but also an able theologian; this combination was rare and made him a unique presence in the Japanese Christian community. He was able to argue with straightforwardness, with almost blunt expressions, against his ecclesiastical superiors. But there was a sense of honesty and integrity in him which took the edge off his sharpness in human relationships. He was deeply loved by his church members, almost to the point of devotion.

A point of uniqueness in terms of language style is significantly noticeable in Suzuki. His sermons start almost abruptly with short sentences, some of which are incomplete. There is seldom an explanatory note, somewhat common in Japanese preaching. And throughout the sermons, there are dispersions of short sentences or just words, disconnected

from the whole literary run of thought. They serve almost as a pause and at the same time an emphasis point before moving on to the next phase of developing ideas. This is done very effectively in Suzuki's sermons.

Another characteristic in Suzuki's sermons is a frequent and clear use of subjective words, especially "I", though "we" is more commonly used. Here we listeners are able to detect that, for Suzuki, Christian preaching is directed not only to the congregation but also to himself. When it is sharply pointed to social evils and the sinfulness of humanity, the listener is confronted by Suzuki's words which are also self-indicting. In proclaiming the message of forgiveness and comfort, there seems to be a clear communication of "I am forgiven with you" or "You and I are sick but we can be healed."

Preaching for life tomorrow. Suzuki was a competent scholar both in theology and in New Testament study. Whether he was writing for Fukuin to Sekai (The Gospel and the World) on the study of the Gospel according to Mark<sup>95</sup> or about his life story for Shinto no Tomo (The Layman's Friend)<sup>96</sup>, his sentences are crisp and his literary style simple. At times he sounds almost elementary in describing his message. His exceptional ability as a preacher is well utilized in these

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<sup>95</sup>M. Suzuki, Kami no Kuni no Otozure.

<sup>96</sup>The series of articles for the magazine for lay people were eventually compiled into a paperback entitled Ohdo (see footnote 84).

almost-too-simple expressions he used in expounding some profound scriptural truth. As a former member of Suzuki's church once recalled, "We usually went home chewing on one idea."

For Suzuki, the missiological call for his ministerial style was to keep the pulpit alive with the depth of the scriptural truth constantly bringing to its light the social reality and spiritual concern of his people. The pulpit was for him a crucial contact between the Word and all realities in which that Word was to be the criterion of values. For him the call, then, was to be a pastor for his people so that they could look toward tomorrow with some insight for direction. For him the march toward that direction was not always an orderly and heroic march but often a faltering and shaky step-by-step search for the goal to be achieved. For him a march for Christians had to be "faltering" because it was a historical process. One is likely to be fatigued, wounded and facing death in attempting to be loyal to the gospel in the turmoil of historical reality. One cannot go on simply discarding existential events and hoping to reach the goal. For Suzuki a part of the function of preaching was to call out "halt!" to his people, to look together at the steps just taken and to see what God has in store for us for tomorrow. Thus it was natural for him to continue the slogan of his predecessor, Isamu Ohmura, as the emphasis of his leadership, "the Kyodan for tomorrow." It was inevitable for him to lead the Kyodan to pronounce, even twenty-one years after the end

of World War II, the Confession of Responsibility, as for him it was impossible to further his steps without facing up to the sinful acts committed.

Suzuki was a controversial person but strikingly attractive to friends as well as foes. For his people at the church, he was a pastor throughout. For them Suzuki's preaching was usually the food for life tomorrow, reflecting the eternal Shepherd in the God of Jesus Christ.

## CHAPTER 4

THE SEARCH FOR PREACHING IN TOMORROW'S  
CHURCH IN JAPANThe Word of God and the Word of  
Man in Japan

The word in Christian preaching is based upon the event of Jesus Christ and his incarnation. It was Dietrich Bonhoeffer who said that the proclaimed word "neither originates from a truth once perceived nor from personal experience.... The proclaimed word is the incarnate Christ himself."<sup>1</sup> From the very beginning of the Christian movement, standing on the prophetic preaching of the Old Testament, the followers of Jesus were people of proclaimed words. From Jews to the Heathens, every human being was considered to be a potential hearer for the Good News of Jesus the Christ. The Hellenistic environment of the world in which Paul traveled on his missionary journeys provided new dimensions for the spoken word of God through human instruments. There were, from the beginning of the forming of the body of believers, "rationally oriented, apologetic thought patterns in the addresses which are directed to the heathen...."<sup>2</sup> Thus the history of the church has inherited from its formative period a religion of

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<sup>1</sup>Clyde E. Fant, Bonhoeffer, Wordly Preaching (Nashville: Nelson, 1975), p. 126.

<sup>2</sup>Yngve Brilioth, A Brief History of Preaching (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), p. 16.

spoken words rooted in the culture and language of a particular setting into which it aimed to make its message penetrate.

The Japanese culture and language to which the Protestant faith attempted to make its impact had its own richness and complexity. Religiously speaking, the history of some thirteen-hundred years of Buddhist work had a profound and extensive influence on Japan, culturally as well as linguistically. Though Confucianism never took root in Japan as a religion, its political thought and ethical teaching had a dominating effect upon the entire sphere of human relationships and morality. Confucianism at no time took the form of an institutionalized religion, but as a system of thought it associated itself intimately with both Shintoism and Buddhism.

Culturally it was Buddhism which brought numerous elements of its own, primarily from China. Those cultural elements had influence of both Confucianism and Taoism. Both religiously and culturally Japan in the sixth century was virgin soil with no indigenous foundation of its own. The combination of Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism, which characterized the religious orientation of China at the time, was quickly accepted into the primitive religious situation in Japan. The naturalistic and animistic nature of Taoism was quickly assimilated into Shintoism, which already existed in Japan as a folk religion, and soon the tri-religious ethos was to dominate Japanese society. As Hichihei Yamamoto argues, the Japanese, historically, are not religiously tolerant. "It is simply that the Japanese culture had its

initiation with the process of merging religions and the concept of religious assimilation has become an accepted and orthodox tradition...."<sup>3</sup>

It was this tradition of merged religions and their assimilation with culture that made the society potentially secular. Reischauer discusses such a potential for secularity, which has been clearly observable in Japanese history since the seventeenth century, and says that its roots are in Confucian philosophical background.<sup>4</sup> With its emphasis upon a natural and rational order, a strict ethical rule centered around loyalty, filial piety, ritual and etiquette, the feudal samurai society of Japan was self-contained and culturally isolated. The feudal political system of Tokugawa itself was not reflective of Confucian philosophy or ethical standard. But the values and attitudes of the society were dominantly oriented toward Confucianism and religious sentiments and practices provided by Buddhism.

Into this scene the early Protestant missionaries arrived in Japan. Inevitably their means of communication was English and their religious message was radically different from the secularly oriented tri-religious situation of the Japanese. The point of contact, however, was in the ethical implications of Christianity. The early American missionaries

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<sup>3</sup>Hichihei Yamamoto, Juyo to Kaijo no Kiseki (A Locus of Acceptance and Exclusion) (Tokyo: Shufu no Tomo, 1978), p. 28.

<sup>4</sup>Edwin O. Reischauer, The Japanese (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), p. 213.



to Japan had their roots in New England Puritanism and reflected the nineteenth century pietism and revival faith of that nation. The contacts made through ethically oriented religious dialogue were to develop into a significant penetration into groups of young samurai displaced by the radical social changes which accompanied the modernization of Japan in the mid-nineteenth century.

The study of seven Protestant preachers of Japan has indicated that each man had a difficult religious initiation into the Christian faith. Though ethically viable, the religious message of the Cross of Jesus Christ was at best repulsive. At least in the very early stage of Protestant history in Japan, the attraction of Western culture, and thus the learning of the English language, motivated a number of young people, such as Uemura, Ebina and Uchimura, to probe further into the realm of the newly introduced religious faith. For many of the early converts, Christianity was "a new ethics and philosophy of life to take the place of discredited Confucianism."<sup>5</sup>

The Japanese language with which the young Japanese preachers had to expound and preach their faith was a dominantly Chinese language-oriented system. The context in which the language developed into an elaborate system was religiously pantheistic. The tri-religious ethos in Japan for centuries produced innumerable temples and shrines and activities

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 221.

centered around them, but the religious concept of radical monotheism was strikingly new and alien to the Japanese. It took more than the spiritual zeal of early missionaries to convey the Christian faith and its message to the Japanese audience, especially in the period up to the end of World War II. Accepting alien concepts and terminology of the Christian faith was one thing, while finding adequate expressions in Japanese to communicate them was another.

What all of the seven preachers confronted was not only the necessity to shift their value orientation radically in becoming Christians and taking up the missionary calling to preach the Gospel, but to cultivate oral means effective and relevant to Japanese people, whether sophisticated intellectuals or uneducated men and women of labor. The crucial issue for these seven men, then, was to find the maximum point of contact between the Word of God in the Scriptures and the word of human beings in Japanese society.

The Christ they preached was historical in their approach to the Bible. At the point of the historicity of the Christian faith in Jesus Christ, they found the basis for making that Christ come alive to their people. The methodologies they resorted to and utilized were different among them. With Uemura, Ebina and Suzuki, their churches were the arena for proclamation of the Word. They were ecclesiastical leaders as well as pastors. They were mainly biblical preachers. Uchimura placed himself outside the institutional Church by a radical denial of the sacramental authority of the

Church but uplifted the Bible as the sole truth available to every serious searcher. Though his message was not strictly scholarly, his method of study and language appealed to a limited but significant group of intellectuals. Yamamuro and Kagawa focused their preaching ministries both within organized religion and outside by wide outreach for social action, reform and services together with mass evangelistic meetings. Their language was not always traditional religious language or of a sophisticated, scholarly style. But there was a definite effort in both of them to make the Gospel as plain as possible. Kagawa was not always successful at it as he increasingly immersed himself in the world of science. But both Yamamuro and Kagawa exerted a sense of freshness in their command of the language in proclaiming the Gospel message. And there was Watanabe as a biblical scholar, the main part of his life dedicated to the class-room who yet with his intense interest and comprehension of the Japanese mentality and cultural sensitivity put his Bible knowledge into colorful and persuasive language.

The seven preachers were effective within a limited scope. They were not able to reach all people all the time. But they were outstanding models of preachers who seriously tackled the task of defining what message to preach and how to convey that message to people with a specific language enormously different from the biblical environment and historical languages through which the Christian faith had been traditionally transmitted. Their approach was to neither deny nor

unconditionally affirm the culture into which they attempted to plant the seed of Christian faith. Basically their attitude was a mixture of critical analysis, sensitive dissection, serious sorting out for selection and elaboration of the best in order to let the gospel message be a fulfilling power of both its own message and the cultural soil to be tilled.

Of the seven preachers, none had a Lutheran or Episcopalian background. It is also noticeable that none of these men was liturgically oriented and none seemed to show a deep appreciation for sacramental tradition. Baptism was certainly cherished, and communion periodically observed, by all of them except for Uchimura, in whose theology sacraments were considered not absolutely indispensable. What they have reflected was the general characteristic of the Protestant churches in Japan to nearly sacramentalize the spoken word through preaching. This characteristic, too, can be traced to the cultural context into which the Protestant faith was rooted. The early missionaries were looked upon by the Christian community as "masters" and the converts as "deshi" or "disciples", a pattern of relationship which prevailed in this feudal society with its strong emphasis upon the Confucian concepts of loyalty, duty and harmony. Though the religious orientation based upon Buddhism was highly ritualistic, the Protestant faith reflecting the Puritan simplicity and sternness of the missionaries did not nurture the effort to indigenize the Christian sacraments. Most of the seven preachers did not elaborate on a theological understanding of

sacrament and liturgy for the worshipping life of the Church.

In spite of this inadequacy of theological depth on sacraments and seeming over-emphasis on preaching, these seven men nevertheless achieved a basic grasp of the essential message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as contained in the Bible and of Christ as a living presence in the midst of the Japanese cultural and social setting. Their effort to put the Gospel message into their own language, with its own historical background having no easily accommodative basis for assimilating the traditional Christian concepts and terminology, was at times awkward and yet gradually took effect within the Christian community and eventually outside of it as well.

#### The Christian Imagination

The homiletical characteristics of Japanese Protestantism are evident in the preaching of the seven men studied. Undoubtedly they were of superior quality if not simply better known among able communicators. Their sermons were predominantly biblical in foundation and in actual content. This is still the obvious characteristic of the Protestant preachers today.

Darley Downs, a Congregational missionary who served in Japan for decades, both before and after World War II, once remarked that he had seldom heard a preacher speak on the importance of the church as an institution or the vital necessity of being loyal and actively supportive of the activities of a

church.<sup>6</sup> There was, Downs observed, almost a sense of hesitation on the part of preachers to emphasize detailed aspects of the church life as if their straightforward exposition of the Bible would convey practical instructions without elaboration.

Downs, in the same article, lifted another point of thoughtful criticism by saying,

There is almost no intimacy or appreciation for Buddhist tradition in Japanese preaching. I have only once heard a preacher carefully present the Confucian concept of respect for the dead, or for those who died with faith, and relate it to the Christian understanding of death.<sup>7</sup>

Downs left Japan for retirement in the mid-1960's. Whether his critical remarks have affected Protestant preaching in the past decade remains to be seen. What Downs attempted to emphasize was the importance for preachers not only to make the Bible come alive and speak for itself but to let it stand on the solid cultural, historical and religious foundation and context of Japan. Though granting that the geographical area in which Downs was involved in his missionary work was Tokyo and predominantly metropolitan surrounding areas, the situation in churches of other areas was not so drastically different.

The historicity of the Christian faith had played a key role in the preaching of the seven men. The Christian

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<sup>6</sup>Darley Downs, "Gendai Nihon no Sekkyo" (Contemporary Preaching in Japan) Bokkai to Sekkyo (Ministry and Preaching), II (October 1963) 11.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

faith was understood by the early converts in its historical context in which their newly gained faith was to take root. But Protestant preaching in general failed to maintain such a historical consciousness. Preachers have failed to study and know the uniqueness of the historical, social and cultural climate of Japan with the enthusiasm they have given to a scholarly understanding of the Bible. Even though Japanese life is so intimately interwoven with the world of nature, the words of Jesus, "Consider the flowers of the field" are seldom proclaimed from the Japanese pulpit. The strength of Kagawa was partly in his sensitivity to nature through his interest in science. Japanese preaching has claimed the radical vertical relationship of God and his people as its message and negated the work of the creative God in the natural climate which molded Japanese culture.

The task for a preacher in Japan is not only to probe seriously in his biblical study into the revelation of God in Jesus Christ as an on-going historical event but to objectify the situational context of Japan in which he is called to preach that revelation. The process of objectifying the cultural and social context also requires an objectification of himself as a person. The significant strength of the seven preachers was their ability to integrate the biblical message, the cultural and historical context of Japan and themselves as unique persons, reflecting both the culture and the faith in Jesus Christ. They were not hesitant, as they felt compelled to do so, to use the personal pronoun "I". This

self-assertion could have sounded to their contemporaries contrary to the Confucian virtue of self-concealment or self-negation, but reflected their adamant faith that the God of Jesus Christ had a legitimate claim on the Japanese society of which they were a part. They were able to inter-relate the universal implication of the truth of the gospel and peculiar and indigenous elements of the Japanese culture.

What is demanded of the Protestant preachers in Japan today is the ability to proclaim the universal truth of the gospel by words meaningful and understandable to contemporary men and women, confronting them with the truth of the gospel which may be radically contradictory to the traditional context. On the other hand, a careful probe into the historically rich soil and ferment of culture in Japan may provide an appropriate context in which the gospel message might very well assimilate itself for a fuller fulfillment. This may be the process Uchimura described as a grafting principle, on which Professor Takeda elaborated in her book.<sup>8</sup> The radical difference between a branch and a tree symbolizes discontinuity. The grafting process in which an integration of the two may produce something different from either one, and yet authentic to both, achieves continuity. But the grafting requires the utmost sensitivity for both the branch and the tree.

Whether by preaching of confrontation or assimilation,

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<sup>8</sup>Kiyoko Takeda, Haikyosha no Keifu (The Genealogy of the Apostate) (Tokyo: Iwanami Shinsho, 1973).



the task of preaching in Japan needs to stand on the responsive ground both to the biblical truth and to the existential needs of the society with living human beings. Such preaching cannot remain a monologue but is required to mobilize all possible imagination and creative insights as well as innovation. While the world of communications is transforming the entire human situation and patterns of relationships, nearly suffocating the art of oral communication, Christian preaching cannot remain free from a possible self-imposed extinction.

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## CHAPTER 5

## CONCLUSION

This study has attempted, according to its aim as stated in the introduction, to place and to focus on Protestant preaching in the Japanese context. Seven men who took seriously the calling to communicate, by spoken words, the truth of God revealed in the event of Jesus Christ were selected for analysis. The preaching in this study is understood as "divine truth through personality or the truth of God voiced by a chosen personality to meet human needs."<sup>1</sup> Personalities are products of a complex process in which physical and non-physical, material and non-material elements of human existence are interwoven. Thus a meaningful understanding of a personality is not possible without a probe into his/her culture, social as well as spiritual context and surrounding. And language, as the most essential component of a particular culture, must be examined with care within its cultural context in order to know the dynamics of relationships in which that personality is involved in daily life, private and public.

Thus this study began its course of inquiry, in the second chapter, by looking into interactions of language and

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<sup>1</sup>Andrew W. Blackwood, The Preparation of Sermons (New York: Abingdon Cokesbury Press, 1948), p. 13.

culture in Japan. Language, though conservative in nature, having characteristics of being voluntary and social, does change along with cultural and social changes. Unique environment and circumstance of history, climate, religious ferment and patterns of human relationships have affected Japanese language. Though phonetically simple, its linguistic structure is considered by scholars to be one of the most difficult. The inheritance from China of characters for writing made Japanese a visually-oriented language. The imagery of written language was, and still is, dominant in the linguistic character of the Japanese people.

Cultural values, intimately related to Buddhist and Confucian teachings and ethics, have affected patterns and structures of inter-personal communication, particularly of an oral nature. Vagueness is a virtue; or slowness of speech is generally cherished over verbal eloquence. These are culturally acquired attitudes related to the other-directed criterion for self-identity in the vertically structured Japanese society. The elaborate system of honorifics has a direct implication in communicating religious concepts and message. How effectively such communication is received by its hearers depends to a large extent on how an honored person, object or idea is linguistically presented.

Into the island nation with a relatively homogeneous cultural and language identity came Protestant Christianity in the mid-nineteenth century. The third chapter dealt with the introduction of Protestantism and its religious context and

placed seven preachers within that historical setting. The coming of Protestantism to Japan was a sort of religious, as well as cultural, intrusion, if not invasion. The Protestant faith was first approached by groups of young samurai, displaced by the radical transformation of the political and social system from the feudalistic rule of the Tokugawa Shogun to the modernized imperial structure of the Meiji era. They were eager to learn about Western culture as much as, if not more than, about Christianity. The impact on those young samurai of the early Protestant missionaries, reflecting predominantly the Puritanical religious fervor and piety of nineteenth century-America, was significant.

Out of the Kumamoto, Yokohama and Sapporo bands, organized by educationally eager young men and stimulated by American missionaries and teachers, emerged the first leaders of Protestantism in Japan. They were the first fruit of the missionary zeal and their personalities and intellectual ability were of high caliber. Their devotion both to their country and to God was intense.

The shape of Protestant preaching in Japan was molded by such men as Masahisa Uemura, Danjo Ebina, Tsuneteru Miyagawa and Yoichi Honda. Kanzo Uchimura, as we have seen, though he did not take the ordained ministry as a vocation, played a unique role by committing himself to the study of the Bible and resorting to publicly organized Bible classes for preaching. He left a lasting impact upon intellectuals of his day. These men of the spoken word of the Gospel all reflected both

the faith and expressions of it by the early missionaries on one hand and, on the other, their deeply cultural orientation of mid-nineteenth century Japan. Uemura, Ebina and Uchimura were included in this study to see the preaching of the first half of the Protestant history of Japan.

The national drive to strengthen its economic and military power by Japan produced numerous social problems and dehumanizing phenomena. In the period extending to the early part of the twentieth century, while the nation was undergoing rapid social change, the historical religions tended to support and reinforce the traditional social system of the past rather than aiding in the transformation of the society or participating in personal and social reconstruction. The Protestant Church in Japan was still in its infant stage and too self-occupied to serve as an agent of reconstruction.

Out of the social turmoil of the early twentieth century came two men to arouse social consciousness, not only within the Christian community but outside it as well. Gumpei Yamamuro and Toyohiko Kagawa did not fall into the category of an accepted image of Christian ministers. Though rooted in a deep spirituality and committed to the evangelical calling, these men moved both in and out of the churches and streets with passionate preaching. How much they actually accomplished in terms of social reform and reconstruction still awaits an objective historical analysis and evaluation. There is no question, however, that both their words and deeds had shaken the conscience of many in Japan during their

lifetime.

The penetration into the intellectual strata of the society by the early missionaries and a man like Uchimura left a permanent imprint on the life of the Japanese church, an intense commitment to biblical scholarship as the food for faith. Zenda Watanabe stands in the arena of such scholarship. A rare personality and a competent scholar, he was effectively communicative both in the class room and in the pulpit. There was no dichotomy between his biblical scholarship and the biblical message for preaching. His deep interest in theatrical arts of Japan provided him with a keen awareness of how to express the biblical message with a sense of drama, both to people of intellectual sophistication and to common people with minimum education.

Though Watanabe's preaching, on a regular basis, was post-World War II work, Masahisa Suzuki was studied as the best example of pastoral preaching with a consistently social message. I have stated that his preaching was, in the best sense of the term, in the prophetic tradition. A further inquiry into the preaching of the post-war period requires time and the gathering of materials for an objective analysis. Suzuki, at least, can be taken as an indication of an emerging direction in Protestant preaching today.

Thus the personalities, faith and message of seven preachers were considered from the standpoint of oral discourse of the gospel in the public ministry of the Christian faith. In the fourth chapter some generalization was made in

analyzing the seven preachers to see how and why their Christian preaching was significantly effective. The religious context in which preaching was done was the same for all preachers of the church. Though situational dynamics were different from time to time, according to certain geographic locations within Japan, the basic cultural, social, linguistic and religious factors which need to be taken into account and consideration by all preachers were common among them. The seven preachers reflected their sensitivity to the cultural context in which the gospel was to be expounded. They had mastery of the language in order to express culturally "alien" concepts and values of their religious faith.

The seven preachers had their limitations. Some were better preachers from pulpits of the institutional church. Some of them were freer and more persuasive in public halls and in factories than in sanctuaries of churches. But as preachers, all possessed integrated abilities for critical analysis, sensitive dissection of problems, focusing of the message to the point of artistry, command of the language for appropriate expressions.

Now the sights must be set for the future of the church in Japan. As I search for models for Christian preaching in the church in Japan in the decades to come, the matter of imaginativeness and creative innovation cannot be overemphasized. In this country where technological developments have affected the world of mass communication and media extensively, and they, in turn, the whole society and the human

realities in it, the art, in the deepest sense, of oral communication must be protected and nurtured. The words spoken by living personalities must give Japanese people an alternative to images and sound waves bombarding them through the mass media. The biblical truth must be spoken as well as shown in dehumanizing situations and conditions. Certainly preachers need to be committed to the God of Jesus Christ but that commitment demands a strategic skill for ministry and evangelism together with a deep understanding of their own culture and language. Effective preaching in a complex age such as ours may require exceptional personalities of charisma. It may demand superb effort on the part of all preachers to know the Bible and the needs of their people. But it certainly requires a sensitive and persistent probe into the cultural and social ethos and language of any people to whom the Word of God is to be spoken.

Shusaku Endo, a renowned Christian writer, in his novel Silence, a fascinating, if not soul-shaking, story about the early Catholic missionaries and converts in the feudal Japan of the sixteenth century, calls Japan a spiritual swamp. In this swamp, says Endo, everything will rot, even when roots seem to take hold in it.<sup>2</sup> But we have seen, in the lives and work of the seven preachers, that the swamp can produce Christian fruit, however difficult the rooting process may be.

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<sup>2</sup>Shusaku Endo, Silence (Tokyo: Sophia University, 1969), p. 292.



The work must continue, knowing that some day the swamp may be covered with blossoms of lively colors, reflecting the creative work of God.

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